



# Missing Communities - The Final Report

**Prepared for:**

**Southend Community-in-Harmony Partnership (SCHP)**

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## Terms and Acronyms

**Asylum Seeker:** a person who, perceiving a threat to personal safety in his or her country of residence, seeks protection by moving to and obtaining the right to reside in another country

**Black:** when used in this report, e.g. as in the term “Black African”, means non-white.

**BME:** Black and Minority Ethnic - a term applied to those whose origin is not White, Anglo-Saxon, British or anyone not classed as “White British”. (Some use the acronym BAME - Black Asian Minority Ethnic.)

**CAB:** Citizens Advice Bureau

**CRA:** Cluny Residents Association

**DIAL:** Disability, Information and Advice Line

**Education:** learning of knowledge, information and skills throughout life.

**EREC:** Essex Racial Equality Council

**EU:** European Union

**Faith Community:** a term to describe any religious organisation or congregation of adherents of a particular religion or sect, including those that bring together a number of groups and interests.

**GP:** General Practitioner (doctor)

**HARP:** Homeless Action Resource Project

**IMD:** Index of Multiple Deprivation

**LAA:** Local Area Agreement

**LSP:** Local Strategic Partnership

**NHS:** National Health Service

**PCT:** Primary Care Trust

**Racism:** the prejudice that members of one race are intrinsically superior to members of other races, discriminatory or abusive behavior towards members of another race.

**Regeneration:** process seeking to “breathe new life”, improving life in run-down areas: people’s perception, community spirit, environment, amenities, safety, education, health, housing, business, employment etc.

**SACC:** Southend Adult Community College

**SATs:** Standard Assessment Tests

**SAVS:** Southend Association of Voluntary Services

**SBC:** Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

**SCHP:** Southend Community-in-Harmony Partnership

**SEH:** South Essex Homes

**SEMF:** The Southend Ethnic Minority Forum

**SEPT:** South Essex Partnership NHS Trust

**SHAN:** Southend Homeless Action Network

**Social Justice:** is the concept in a society where justice is achieved in every aspect of society, as opposed to legal justice (whether substantive or procedural)

**Southend Together:** the LSP for Southend - a multi-agency partnership that is responsible for overseeing the delivering of the intended outcomes of the LAA.

**THT:** Terrence Higgins Trust

**VCS:** Voluntary and Community Sector

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## Missing Communities - Executive Summary

The Southend Community-in-Harmony Partnership (SCHP), with the help of a grant from “Awards for All”, has carried out an investigation into some of the missing communities in our town and took part in a number of activities to serve them. We coined the term “missing communities” because these were the people who were largely missing from our annual big (summer) events. The project took place over a fourteen month period, between March 2008 and April 2009. The aim of the project, of which research was a major element, was to profile the missing communities, build relationships, assess needs and facilitate service delivery. Many people contributed to that research from the statutory and voluntary sector and the missing communities themselves.

“Missing Communities” comprises those experiencing various forms of social disadvantage, and our new black and minority ethnic (BME) communities, in particular from Eastern Europe and Black (non-white) Africa. While we wanted to consider all the many new BME groups, we chose to concentrate on three: Polish, Zimbabwean and Malayalee. Polish and Zimbabwean communities have between 1000 and 2000 people living in Southend and are among the fastest growing groups. The Malayalees comprise less than 300 people but is one example from among the many other new communities in Southend. The 2001 Census indicated that Southend had a BME population of approximately 8%. Currently the figure may be as high as 17%. Many among our “missing communities” do not engage with the wider community or with services that can and want to help. Non-engagement in services by those who could benefit most is a pattern that is widely seen.

During the project, as well as carrying out extensive research, we did several things to benefit our missing communities: built relationships, co-operated with existing services and linked up with other interested parties, enhanced our Big (summer) Event, put on an event aimed at the Polish community and started a group that now meets weekly, serving the needs of vulnerable single men, mainly of ethnic background. The Final Report details the activities that took place, the research, the methodology, our findings and the conclusions we drew in respect of the needs and recommendations for future activities. It also relates to the “bigger picture” and other work being undertaken. Our conclusions indicated that there are needs in many areas, although it is wise not to generalise and it is possible with the right approach to address many of these needs.

Some of the resulting issues arising with respect to our missing communities include:

1. Mapping ways various statutory and voluntary agencies work and identifying the key players.
2. Viewing the bigger picture, both nationally and locally, and understanding its relevance.
3. Exploring the vital role that is played by the various faith communities.
4. Reflecting on the part played and could be played by the various BME organisations.
5. Trying to identify issues across all the BME groups, not just the three we focused on.
6. Identification of existing data and information and where the gaps are.
7. Considering issues around race hate and domestic violence - are these real or apparent?
8. Understanding asylum seeker issues, including how the system works and the unmet needs.
9. Issues concerning English language communication and how understanding could improve.
10. Issues about housing and homelessness and how everyone might have decent housing.
11. Issues around providing advice and information and how this might be disseminated to all.
12. Issues regarding children’s education provision and what improvements could be made.
13. Issues relating to addressing health inequalities and how these might be addressed.
14. Issues of engaging in enterprise and employment and thus improve people’s prospects.
15. Acknowledging and identifying where there are gaps in our research and what might be done.
16. Beginning to explore the possibilities of where we might go from here regarding our findings.

SCHP remain committed to supporting our missing communities, and will seek opportunities for further funding of this project. We hope that our findings and recommendations will be adopted by other agencies and this will in turn inform the development and enhancement of services locally.

## Chapter 1: Introduction and project overview

*“Southend Community-in-Harmony Partnership (SCHP), from its outset, has tried to make contact with and serve, principally through putting on its cultural events, the disparate groups that make up the wider Southend community. Of these, the newer ethnic minority communities (in particular Black African and Eastern European) and those who are socially disadvantaged (e.g. the homeless and other disempowered groups) have been least served, despite the big needs in those communities. The £10000 “Awards for All” grant, given to us in March 2008, has enabled us to work toward identifying and reaching the newer ethnic minority communities and meeting their needs. It is intended that the project will complete in December 2008 (note: this date was later extended to March 2009), although follow-up activities will be identified.”*

**Statement of intent issued by SCHP 17<sup>th</sup> April 2008**

This report was commissioned by a local registered charity, the Southend Community-in-Harmony Partnership (SCHP), with funding from the “Awards for All” grant scheme. It contains a comprehensive account of what transpired in a 14-month period (March 2008 until April 2009), while researching, engaging with and seeking to serve some of the “missing communities” that reside in Southend, and whilst looking at the wider issues and bigger picture (national and local). This was done under the title: “The Missing Communities Project”.

This report details the activities that took place, describes the approach to the research, presents the findings, identifies successes and failures, indicates where more work is needed and provides conclusions and recommendations. Above all, it tries to serve Southend’s missing communities. The research undertaken should help this group of people to be empowered and uplifted.

### **The purpose of the project was to:**

1. establish who are the people from “new” ethnic minority communities living in Southend.
2. build up trust and rapport among intended beneficiaries to establish specific needs.
3. begin to meet those needs through partnership working, in particular:
  - providing social and information outlets - through our big summer and other events
  - publishing information to help those who have an interest in serving those communities
  - providing learning opportunities geared to the needs found within those communities

### **Particular distinctive aspects of the project worthy of note are:**

1. partnership working with a wide range of statutory and voluntary agencies to achieve project outcomes (building on well established links). We complement work already undertaken; we are not bound by statutory constraints and can act as independent “honest brokers”.
2. simple and straightforward achievement of project outcomes is anticipated, giving us the
3. flexibility regarding activities undertaken - to do what best meets need with the resources that are available.

### **Particular challenges, that became apparent during the project, include being able to:**

1. establish who are the appropriate groups and persons to work with, being careful to avoid duplication in activities and ensuring all parties are able to share resources and information.
2. build up trust and rapport with the groups we want to help.
3. present the different pieces of the jigsaw in a clear and engaging way, including identifying the missing pieces and instigating initiatives to create and find those pieces.

### **Identifying the missing communities**

We have identified Missing Communities, in relation to the Borough of Southend-on-Sea, as:

1. the socially disadvantaged, e.g. long-term unemployed or incapacitated, the homeless and those in danger of becoming homeless, sufferers of domestic violence, those with mental

health or addiction problems ... as well as others who are on the margins of our society, including from among the housebound elderly and disabled and other groups not profiled but who are socially excluded.

2. sections of the newer ethnic minority communities, notably Eastern Europeans and Black Africans, whose numbers have significantly increased in recent years, but it could include anyone from anywhere in the world. The emergence of these communities has occurred in recent years as few were resident in Southend (or the UK) before this. However, there is also evidence of unmet needs among the more established ethnic minority communities.

The title for the project: “Missing Communities” is an appropriate one as these are the people the Community-in-Harmony events are particularly meant to reach yet, too often, they are missing from those events. And it is not just our events - all sorts of organisations have services that could significantly benefit our missing communities and they too would like to be able to effectively deliver these to where they see the need is greatest. They often fail in this endeavour because: those communities do not know about what is on offer; or there are cultural and other barriers that prevent them engaging with those services; or the services are not quite appropriate in the form they are delivered, indicating there may be a need to tailor these to the needs and preferences of the clients

### **Funding**

The project was made possible by a grant from “Awards for All”, linked to the National Lottery. and linked to the bi-centennial celebration of the abolition of the slave trade. While the world population has increased manifold since then, it is conservatively reckoned there are four times as many slaves now than in William Wilberforce’s day. There is an even greater number of those are oppressed and disempowered, in one way or another, due to inequalities in society and social injustice. While we could find few examples of overt slavery in Southend (although there are strong indications that sex trafficking does take place), we did find many more examples of oppression, disempowerment and exploitation. While the solutions to these injustices are not always easy to find, the need and opportunity to do something to help remove these remain. Setting people free, “Transforming Lives Through Harmony” (the SCHP strap line), and “Creating a Better Southend” (the SBC strap line), have all been driving factors behind this project.

Our funding obligations were discharged in that regular reports were produced that were considered by trustees and the SCHP committee in their regular meetings, culminating an interim report produced toward the end of the project that was sent to our funders. However, we wanted to “tell it as it is” in the hope it will make a difference. This meant a comprehensive report was needed, and this is it. There are different ways this could have been done but the important thing is to describe what happened and to present the findings in as clear and as concise a way as is possible.

### **The target audience**

Besides wanting to let SCHP trustees and members know what happened, from an accountability perspective, it is hoped the readership will extend to all the “movers and shakers” in the town and any who just want to serve our missing communities. It is intended that this report will help to complement and bring together the findings of other reports that touch on common (as well as newly identified) issues. This report has an advantage in that it is written from an independent, voluntary sector perspective, and one where a free hand is allowed, yet is able to critically look at the work being done by a variety of statutory agencies, Most reports are commissioned from within the statutory sector and usually have limited aims and objectives and there may be a tendency not to speak out or else risk alienating people who one relies upon. Even so, it is written from a standpoint that would want to engage all, in a spirit of partnership, to meet the needs of our missing communities. Although the report is limited when it comes to presenting statistical data and cross referencing other data sets, it endeavours to present real life cases studies and actual examples, making it more engaging to many readers and adding to its credibility as a serious piece of work.

## **The key players**

Bringing together the statutory and non-statutory agencies as equal partners to meet needs has been an important ambition that has spurred on the writing of this report. Often those who work in the statutory sector have a good understanding of the government and legislative framework in which they have to operate, have access to data, not all of which is generally accessible, and broadly know what they have to do as well as have access to the funding to make a difference. However, they may not be able to adequately apply these due to a lack of understanding of the needs at the grass root level and without the contacts and trust to make the necessary inroads. Those who operate in the non-statutory sector often have a limited understanding of the big picture and limited resources. But they often have a better understanding of the needs at a grass root level and have good contacts with and the trust of those they seek to serve, and often the passion and drive to make a difference too, and in many cases do what they do without any reimbursement or recognition. Then there are the people who we are trying to help. There often exist among them those who could hold the key to meeting the wider needs in their communities. Above all, the report is targeted at those who will take the information that is provided and use it to make a beneficial difference.

## **Considerations**

Given that the project was for a finite duration with no guarantee of follow-up activity, it was important to complete work once it had begun and be prudent by not undertaking work that might be abandoned unfinished at the end of the project. Thus the emphasis was to provide information that others “working in the field” could use and help to forge partnerships that empower existing or new groups who can then continue the work or build upon any activity that has been undertaken. It was important also to consider the bigger picture, national and local, for appreciating this is the key to finding effective solutions to address the issues. Understanding the perspectives of three rather different groups who have an interest in our missing communities was also a challenge: the statutory sector with its operational constraints, the disparate voluntary sector with its specific focus and the missing communities themselves, with their wide range of insights, needs and aspirations.

## **Outcomes**

The depiction of need that was apparent from the start of the project remains true, even though we now know a lot more. We have met and worked with many of the agencies (statutory and voluntary) with common interests. We have identified much of the work already being done (and which still needs doing) and have been a catalyst for better partnership working and sharing of information. As was anticipated, the focus of the project did shift toward meeting needs not otherwise being met, based on information that we, along with our partners, were able to gather. A number of issues have emerged, ranging from the isolation being experienced by some of those we want to help and the disempowerment of some of the groups that want to serve their community. Other issues include: housing, racism, asylum seeking, advice and information, English communication, education, health and enterprise. A consideration of these and yet further issues is detailed in this report. Many of the needs that have been identified will be best met by other groups, although we have assisted, whenever we could, and will continue to do, such groups in meeting those needs. What has been done to achieve this (and what might be done in the future) is considered in the remaining chapters.

## **Working together**

Finally, being able to identify good people to work with, networking and bringing together disparate groups, have all been key factors driving this project. One of the joys of working on this project, and what should give hope for the future, is discovering people in all sorts of different organisations who are committed to serving our missing communities and who often do so over and beyond the call of duty. These include professionals working in the field, both in the voluntary (including faith) and statutory sectors, as well as members of the targeted communities themselves. As we spoke with these people, we began to feel like the person who opened “Pandora’s Box”, hardly able to keep a lid on what came out, yet trying hard to identify what is happening and what needs to be done. And, in a modest way, along with others, help to serve the missing communities of Southend.

## **Chapter 2: The methodology**

### **About the report**

One of the intentions of the project has been to produce a comprehensive and balanced report that people will read because what it reveals makes compelling reading, even though what is written cannot be read lightly. The report is an account of the 14 month journey of one person and includes the cumulative experiences of many more. It became apparent early on that getting others involved in the project, often in an informal way, was the right way to proceed. Given this adopted approach there are, inevitably, many gaps in terms of people engaged and in issues identified and addressed. The author endeavoured to measure his comments so as not to create unnecessary barriers but also present the pertinent facts and cover as much as he could in an objective way, realising his own preferences and prejudices. Often there are no simple solutions, particularly when legislation and government policy is a factor, e.g., regarding asylum seeker or housing needs. He is aware that people's lives often only improve if that is what they want and are resolved to make happen but, even so, there is much that can be done to remove the obstacles that prevent this and provide the appropriate help. Every effort has been made to ensure this report has been written with an open mind and to give voice to what people have said, while recognising the wide variety of experiences and circumstances, perceptions and needs, amongst even the smallest of these communities.

### **About the author**

This research was undertaken by John Barber in his capacity as a part-time project coordinator and researcher (and with the help of others). Other findings arising from his complementary work have been included where relevant. The author, prior to the start of the project, was active working in the local community and he continues to be so. He has been involved with SCHP since the outset.

### **Research methodology**

This is a qualitative piece of research based around hundreds of hours of interviews (usually using open ended questioning techniques) with an assortment of people from the statutory and voluntary sectors, and the missing communities themselves. Most interviews were carried out 1-to-1 although a few were done in a group setting. The intention was to talk to as many of those who could be mustered, who had something worth saying about our missing communities. The outcome of the interviews along with informal comments and personal observation is what forms the content of the remaining chapters. Seven of the interviews have led to writing case studies, and these were chosen to highlight many of the common issues identified while carrying out research. When it came to engaging people, we found a good approach was to be supportive of what they were interested in, for example giving advice and encouragement, providing resources and linking to helpful services.

While many have been approached and have provided information (see in "Acknowledgements"), there are many others who have not been spoken to, yet may have useful things to add. Besides not engaging with certain people because of an unawareness of their existence or possible contribution, there have been others where a meeting could not be scheduled for one reason or another. Very few declined to respond to requests for information. Besides speaking to people individually, we were able to read reports and data from local and national perspectives which complemented the other work undertaken. We were able to gather information by meeting with the missing communities, by attending their functions e.g. cultural events, church services and house meetings. We were also able to participate in several committees and working parties, often around the theme of diversity.

This report contains a lot of information not presented elsewhere. This was intentional because the project has set out to avoid duplicating and identifies relevant information that is to be found elsewhere if applicable. Regarding existing documentation, many "key" documents and data-sets have been identified and examined, even if only in a cursory manner, yet there remains a plethora of other information in the public domain that could likely prove to be useful

### **Scope of the research**

The project has focused on the newer ethnic minority communities, without ignoring the needs of the social disadvantaged. At the same time it recognises there are some who are members of both groups and there are also significant needs among the more established ethnic minority groups (although these are often more widely recognised). It is difficult to attach numbers to all of these groups, especially when defining “social disadvantage”, but a figure of 10% of a population of 160,000+ would be a conservative estimate. The task potentially is enormous but at least this project has made some significant inroads, even though it has merely begun to touch the surface. Further de-scoping has occurred by focusing on just three of the newer ethnic minority communities: Polish, Zimbabwean and Malayalee, and restricting the number of issues covered. While it recognises there is scope to go into everything in much greater depth, it has at least tried to identify (and profile) many of the communities affected and the issues and concerns. The report is offered with some trepidation because of the number of big issues and the wide area that it tries to cover, many of which have not been given the full justice these deserve, and because many among the readership are already knowledgeable regarding the issues and may have a vested interest in the outcomes of the report and have other perspectives not brought out in the report.

### **Issues of bias**

Whilst the author has made every endeavour to produce a truthful, comprehensive and balanced report, he acknowledges that cases of bias are difficult to eliminate. The author has tried to balance the time spent engaging with professionals working in the field with getting among members of the targeted communities and involvement with their activities. He has tried to be impartial and paint a balanced picture, even though (given the areas the report has chosen to concentrate on) one might suggest some bias. Obviously, the interests and connections of the author and the people he has engaged with have affected what the report has covered. In one way especially, the research element of this project differs from many other projects, where the researcher often sits on the outside and is detached from the subject matter. Here, the researcher is sometimes part of the subject being researched, for example his role in dealing with homelessness issues, being active in his local community and in the Christian faith community. Also the project is much more than research - it is about action leading to transforming lives and research is merely a means to that end.

Having friends who can be critical, particularly SCHP trustees and members and working with and trusting people whose input he has come to value, have both provided the author with a useful corrective. One realisation in taking on such an ambitious remit is the overall picture is often quite complex. Not only does one’s knowledge increase and new insights are invariably presented, but so does the way the picture gets painted. It should be noted that much of this report only came together in the last six weeks of the project, and even now as it is being typed, because only then did sufficient pieces come together to produce the jigsaw puzzle. As the report goes to print, the picture still isn’t quite complete, but hopefully good enough to correctly inform the readership.

### **Deciding upon an approach**

In producing this report some hard decisions had to be made on how to present the material. We were aware that the report is particularly aimed at “movers and shakers” and key influencers in Southend and beyond, many of whom are very busy people who no doubt have more than their fair share of reports to read. However, we did not want to dilute the message that emanated, or omit the key findings from the research, or give short shrift to the many important issues the report is trying to highlight. We were also aware that often there are approaches adopted that present the key points up front and the larger elaboration, along with supporting data, in separate sections, possibly as appendices. Because the “what was done” and “what was discovered” elements are closely bound and there was little produced by way of statistics, tables and pure data, it was decided that this would not be the approach taken. However, knowing from our own experience the tendency to read the executive summary, introduction first, then conclusion and recommendations, and then perhaps

if there is time delve into sections that interest, helped by headings, relating to particular topics, we decided to arrange the report to assist this type of reader while hoping some will delve deeper.

### **Providing a right perspective**

While there are graphic tales and “killer” data that do need presenting, it was important not to oversensationalise matters and to recognise that there are lots of experiences and data that are relatively mundane and there are some BME residents who seem happier with their circumstances than many non-BME residents. It soon became apparent that among all of the community groups that were approached there were wide variations in attitude, age, gender, perspective, socio-economic status, culture, religion, language, ethnicity within ethnic groups etc. It was a common experience throughout the research that every time someone provided input to the research that the picture being presented had to change, even if only in minor ways. Often though, the issues that concern our missing communities most are the same ones that concern members of other communities, for example the need for law and order, a nice environment and a decent quality of life. However, the research did try to determine whether there were particular issues affecting our missing communities and it is those considerations that concern a major part of the report. There have been a few who have expressed irritation at being given a BME tag, where their main aim is to take a full and active part in the wider community and culture and get on with their lives without bothering with such labels. There are yet others who are neither BME nor non-BME - they are of mixed race.

### **Limitations**

The limited resources available for the project has inevitably restricted what could be achieved, yet much has been achieved and many people have contributed to the achievements. The project has drawn upon much of the data that is available (and there is plenty around if you know where to look), and has tried to avoid duplication of effort when it became clear that others were working in a particular area. Where appropriate, we refer to this data and suggest readers study it if they want to know more. Not only does all this help to compensate for the limitations of this project but it also brings to bear an enormous body of evidence and activities that are relevant. While the findings of the report and the strong evidence base needed to give it credibility may be limited due to the qualitative nature of the research, the gaps in it (which have been identified) and the reality that it remains “work in progress”, the fact that much of what has been presented is of a substantial nature and has been corroborated elsewhere, sometimes in several places, ought to count for something.

### **Hidden agendas**

Besides wanting to know more about our missing communities and establishing the necessary links, the project aims to address need, working with those who are able to help the members of these groups and take whatever measures that is needful to uplift and support the people. The author has a certain antipathy toward the notion of signposting people to appropriate services as too often (in his experience) it means needy people are passed from one agency to another without real needs being addressed and problems resolved. For some members of our missing communities, developing good relationships seems appropriate, even if not always practical, where a mentor or advocate can work with individuals to address issues. Often pointing people in the right direction to help overcome the obstacles has to suffice. But there are a few that seem beyond even this kind of help, and it is one of the frustrations and realities of the delivery part of this project that however right a certain course of action may be for a person, one can't make people do what they are not prepared to do. This is especially true of those with drug and alcohol problems and personality issues. If there is a “hidden agenda” in the project, it is to promote as a consequence the joining up of services, the meeting of peoples' needs, social justice and giving power to the people. Research reinforced several concerns, some held before the project begun but some also as a result of the research, with the realisation that while there may be many needs in any given community it is often the community themselves, and individuals within those communities, that need to act to meet those needs with the rest helping where they can. Surely, this is the community-in-harmony dream?

## Chapter 3: Profiling the new ethnic minority communities

### Reflecting on the data

This study does not profile the “social disadvantage” elements of our missing communities, unless it is also an issue (which it often is) with our newer BME communities. Neither does it deal with the more established BME communities other than “in passing”. This was done in order to de-scope what the project covers, even though the issues are significant. Factors that relate to social disadvantage, e.g. high unemployment, poor health, bad housing, living in areas with a more than an average level of crime and anti-social behaviour, are taken into account by government when assigning an index of multiple deprivation (IMD) to a particular area. The three central Southend wards: Victoria, Kursaal and Milton are in the top 20% of most deprived wards in the East of England, with parts being in the top 10%. Of the remaining 14 wards in Southend, 11 of them have pockets in the top 20%, with three (Shoebury, Chalkwell and Southchurch) with pockets in the top 10%, although in most of the wards there are pockets of relative affluence. While not given the same attention as Victoria, Milton and Kursaal, Westborough ward has both issues of deprivation and a higher than average sized BME population. It seems wards with a higher IMD attract more Government money while it is more difficult to fund activities outside those wards.

When considering where people of ethnic minorities live, there seems to be a strong correlation between the more deprived wards and greater than average proportion of BME residents. This connection is even extended to the pockets of deprivation in the “non-deprived” wards. Thus with respect to the most deprived wards: Victoria (29%), Kursaal (22%), Milton (43%), these all significantly exceed the Southend average of 17% of BME residents. While more work is needed to quantify this, certain streets in the town attract concentrations of certain BME communities more than other BME communities. While the Southend schools census data indicates a 17% BME population the percentage of first language spoken (not English) is 11%; although how well written and spoken English is understood, or used, in homes will vary considerably and the degree of understanding (spoken and written) is unclear from the schools data. This high figure does though indicate the significance of issues around the use of English and competence in the English language is the key to empowerment and effective access to services.

Using the Southend schools census data, the following table shows the percentages of first language (not English) spoken by school children (Czech and Albanian languages have grown significantly and both overtook Punjabi in 2009). (It would be interesting to have parent language data):

Polish (0.8%)	Bengali (0.7%)
Urdu (0.6%)	Shona (0.5%)
Albanian (0.5%)	Czech (0.4%)
Chinese (0.3%)	Portugese (0.2%)
Filipino (0.2%)	Panjabi (0.2%)
Ndebele (0.2%)	Malayalam (0.2%)
French (0.2%)	

Using the same data, the following table shows percentages for the ethnic population in Southend. Data may include ambiguous or duplicate returns and those from mixed ethnic backgrounds. While this does highlight the established BME communities it does so even more with the new ones:

Black African (2.0%)	Eastern European (1.6%)
Other White (not British or European) (1.1%)	Caribbean (including mixed race) (1.0%)
Indian (1.0%)	Pakistani (0.9%)
Bangladeshi (0.8%)	Chinese (0.8%)
Western European (0.7%)	Irish (0.4%)

### **Finding out and acting on our findings**

This report targets BME communities which have grown the most in recent years, particularly Black Africans and Eastern Europeans - it is evident that many African and Eastern European countries are represented in these new communities. During the course of this project we have engaged with many people of many ethnic origins but we have focused on the Polish and Zimbabwean communities since they are most representative in terms of numbers. The contacts we and our partners already had with those communities provided us with many useful leads. This report also recognises the emergence of communities from other parts of the world and has focused on the Malayalees, who originate from Kerala state, South India.

Regarding the established BME communities many, although not all, have strong ties within their own groups, especially cultural ones, which brings them together. Over the years many have integrated well into the wider community, although how well is open to further study, while often retaining their cultural links. While needs do exist for those communities, this report has not focused on them because the needs which pertain to the newer communities are less well known and, in many cases, the unmet needs are seemingly greater. It seems the more established groups tend to have associations (formal or otherwise) to champion their issues and people their own informal networks they can turn to. That is less evident among the newer ethnic minority groups who tend to be overlooked when considering BME issues in statutory and voluntary BME forums. Even so, among those communities who have been in Southend for many years there have been recent additions through immigration. Often (but not always) coming to a well established community, where relatives have preceded them, makes settling down in the town much easier.

Many of these communities, “missing” and otherwise, have their own focus groups - often centred around places of religious worship which deal with social, as well as, religious matters. Two examples are the Greek Orthodox Church of St Barbaras and St Phanourios (previously St. Pauls CofE) in Summercourt Road, for the Greek community, and the recently opened mosque in Chelmsford Avenue, serving mainly but not exclusively the Bangladeshi community (the other mosque in Southend is in West Road and serves particularly the Pakistanis). Even among our chosen missing communities, “church” plays an important part. Many from the Polish and Malayalee communities are part of the Catholic tradition and have services in their own languages (held in established Catholic churches) which incorporate their traditions; many from the Zimbabwean community (as well as from many of the other African countries) belong to Pentecostal type churches, sometimes serving specific “tribal” groups and sometimes being more wide open - although a minority have settled among primarily non-African congregations.

What follows is a consideration of some of those issues that particularly affect some of the newer ethnic minority communities and only a few BME communities. Some issues are shared with the ethnic majority. Those who have lived in Southend for many years will have noticed many recent changes, e.g. languages heard on the street, an increase in those who are visibly BME, the number of BME related businesses, the composition of people in schools and the work place and also noticed the resultant cultural changes. Notwithstanding gaps in investigation, this report aims to help identify what is happening, including the needs and opportunities. We have tried to cover the broad spectrum of needs and perspectives, realising there is often a tendency to focus on men, especially those who are leaders in their communities or who represent particular concerns. Often needs and perspectives of a less vocal minority are overlooked, e.g., women and children. We are also aware many people came from countries which operate quite different systems, e.g., regarding welfare, and often have difficulties adjusting to the British system, albeit more “user-friendly”. As many have come from oppressive regimes, the idea of a benevolent state may be an alien concept.

The work we have done is partly to begin to answer the question: how can we, individually and collectively within the wider community, respond to meet the needs of our missing communities?

## Chapter 4: Reviewing the existing data

Potentially, the most helpful source for data for finding out about our missing communities is that derived from the last National Census (2001), which is presented in various forms on the website of the Office of National Statistics: <http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/> . Unfortunately, a significant part of that data is now out of date, especially that which relates to ethnic minorities. This is made worse if we accept a widely held view, e.g. derived from evidence relating to numbers registered with doctor surgeries, that the last census under-counted the Southend population to the tune of 16000 persons (the Census indicating 160,000 people were living in the town, while it was more likely to be in the region of 176,000) and it is also likely that a large proportion of those that were not included in the Census count were from our missing communities.

A further confounding factor is the transient nature of elements of the town's population, e.g. relating to asylum seekers, and it being a seaside resort and an "end of the line" town. The Census results indicated the 2001 Black African population of Southend to be 0.5%, yet recent data taken among school children suggest that percentage to be around 2%. While there has been a sharp rise in the Black African population, a 400% rise seems surprising (and unlikely). The 2001 National Census results indicated the Southend BME population to be 7-8%. What the School Census results shows is that there have been rises in the ethnic minority population each year and that it is among the newer ethnic minority communities where the biggest rises come from (26700 pupils counted in 2007), with the BME school population currently standing at around 17%.

While this does not necessarily reflect the profile of the town as a whole, the actual percentage and ethnic profile of the population of Southend is unlikely to be too far removed from what this data shows. Moreover, school census results tend to be referred to by statutory agencies seeking to profile ethnicity more than any other data sets and no doubt indicates the confidence people have in this data. Of the 17%, up to half is from the newer ethnic minority communities, which have grown sharply, with the other half from the more established ethnic minority communities, in particular: Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Caribbean, Chinese as well as those which had sizable existing European populations, e.g. Greek. Comparing the latest School Census data and 2001 National Census data, and notwithstanding various confounding factors, this would suggest that the number of BME residents in Southend may have risen between 50 and 100% in a period of 8 years, with the steepest rise being among the Eastern Europeans and Black Africans (by Black, and recognising the different ways Africans see themselves, we are referring to non-white).

During the course of our investigations we contacted other agencies that might provide statistical information regarding our missing communities and while data does exist there is none that matches the School Census data in terms of comprehensiveness. In addition, there is a plethora of anecdotal evidence, held by such organisations and individuals, all of which is relevant, including what members of the missing communities have themselves said, based upon personal observation and experience. Interesting data was unearthed as a result and this was used in order to complement and interpret the two aforementioned data sets and help to fill in some of the gaps.

While Data Protection is always an important issue, and often a frustrating one when important information is withheld as a result, it did not prove to be a major difficulty for this project in being able to achieve its main aims. While some data was inaccessible because of data protection issues, the bigger problem was the way certain data was presented and its lack of comprehensiveness. The resources were often not available for achieving the necessary data collection, although it is noted that the key statutory agencies e.g. Southend Borough Council (SBC) and NHS South East Essex do a lot of analytical work on the data they have and have the tools to help e.g. Mosaic. There is a concern that while the tools may be in place, the important data often is not, and this is an area to be addressed. Relying on the type of information that is used to support credit checks may help profile people's spending patterns for example but it is hardly enough when it comes to understanding the

sort of issues identified in this report. There was a feeling among some we spoke with that we do need to collate and share data in order to not reinvent the wheel (as tends to happen). The SBC led Data Observatory project is an example of work being carried out that is meant to help achieve this.

Some of the more useful data sets that we have come across are:

- Data gathered by South East Essex Primary Care NHS Trust
- Data gathered by Turning Tides: relating to BME community profiling and its study to establish the need and feasibility of community based business approach - both reports target the three “deprived” wards served by Turning Tides: Milton, Kursaal, Victoria
- Data and information gathered by South Essex Homes regarding tenant profile
- Data and information gathered by various departments of Southend Borough Council
- Data that has been collected by Southend Association of Voluntary Services (SAVS)

Because of their strategic importance regarding Southend’s missing communities and things that might be done to help, e.g. new funded projects, we refer to the following documents (all of which can be downloaded from the relevant websites or obtainable from the organisations responsible):

1. Strategic Plan for NHS South Essex 2009-2014: this document (currently under review), produced by NHS South East Essex in wide consultation, will affect how health services (including addressing the many factors relating to health) are to be provided and the priorities.
2. Sustainable Community Strategy 2007 - 2017: this is the document of Southend Together, the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) that brings together key statutory and non-statutory organisations in determining the future direction for the town. There is an expectation, especially where statutory held funding is concerned, that community led projects need to be in line with this strategy. Many of the committees and working parties, usually involving Southend Borough Council, some of which we have been able to contribute to, bear reference to this strategy.
3. Southend’s Local Area Agreement (LAA) 2008 - 2011: this document provides the detail of how the aforementioned strategy is to be implemented in this period.

Of the other local documents, one that is particularly relevant for this project because it highlights important issues and will likely inform and influence the response of Southend Borough Council and its partners, is the Community Cohesion Strategy for Southend, which will soon be publicly released. It is envisaged that many of the findings of that report will correlate with those found in this report and the fact that this important work was being done did have a bearing on the approach we have adopted: which is to complement rather than duplicate what is already being done. Other key Council documents for particular aspects of this project include the Homelessness Prevention Strategy and those that relate to its Equality and Diversity policies, and there are others too (not examined), for example those relating to various aspects of social care and supporting people.

In addition to what specifically relates locally, there is an enormous amount of other relevant information available in the public domain. Some relates to research done on a national or regional level, yet pertinent to Southend, for example the report by Sigma Research ([www.sigmaresearch.org.uk](http://www.sigmaresearch.org.uk)) on meeting HIV prevention needs of Africans living in England and that of MENTER ([www.menter.org](http://www.menter.org)) as part of its remit (that includes research) to develop the BME sector in our (Eastern) region. Some documents relate to the implementation of government policy, and while this may seem to be overwhelming and constantly changing, these are relevant because it helps define the bigger picture that statutory services in particular have to operate. For example, there are publications which support the agenda that is supposed to give more power and a greater say at grass roots level in addressing local needs as well as meeting national targets, particularly significant when it comes to spending money - relevant also because of a notable shift, in recent years, in attitude among statutory organisations toward involving the voluntary sector more.

## **Chapter 5: Polish, Zimbabwean and Malayalee communities**

Profiling each of the large number of ethnic groups from all over the world that are resident in Southend would no doubt be an interesting challenge and a useful undertaking. However, it would also be a massive task, especially given the ethnic subdivisions in each community and range of attitude, social status and experiences, and thus is not one that has been carried out in this project due its limited resources. It should also be borne in mind that a significant proportion of those with an ethnic background are of mixed heritage and this would add to the challenge particularly as, other than some profiling work, issues around mixed race have not been looked at. From the outset of the project it was recognised that the two areas of the world, which have given the greatest increase in local population, are Eastern Europe and Africa. Many of the countries in those areas are now represented in Southend. The biggest representation from Eastern Europe comes from Poland. The biggest representation from Africa comes from Zimbabwe.

There are likely between 1500 - 2000 residents from the Polish community living in Southend, with the Zimbabweans not that far behind numerically. Because the 2001 Census data is unreliable for present purposes and other data sets only tell part of the story, we can only estimate numbers. The biggest difference between these two communities, other than obvious language, appearance and cultural ones, is that those from Poland have every right to live and work in the UK, and at least limited recourse to welfare and training benefits, by virtue of being members of the European Union, whereas the (likely) majority from Zimbabwe are asylum seekers (or failed asylum seekers) who are not allowed to work in the UK, who can only access much more limited welfare benefits and if receiving benefits their movements are frequently closely monitored (including having to report regularly at Police Stations). These groups present an interesting contrast when it comes to considering the various issues, yet they also have much in common.

Our investigations have led us on a journey “all over the world” when it came to engaging with individuals and looking at the communities that are represented. We have focused on the Polish and Zimbabweans (a number of the issues that have been identified being more widely applicable) because it gave us the best research returns. Additionally, we have profiled those from Kerala, South India (referred to as the “Malayalees”) and, because the author is married to a Malayalee and visits Kerala regularly, and has many interactions with and knowledge of that community. They present an interesting contrast to the other two communities selected. The numbers of Malayalees living in Southend may only be around 200-300, and most would have come since the 2001 Census.

What follows is accompanied by the standard warning: we must not generalise, there may be (and often is) several sub-cultures and a range of ethnicities in many of these groups, only a tiny portion of the respective communities have been spoken to and not all the issues have been considered. Moreover, some of what has been written may have been part based partly on the author’s own impressions and pre-conceptions and the views of the people he has happened to meet.

### **Polish**

In trying to understand how the Poles got to Britain, the author came to the view that most have come here as a result of four waves of migrants. Many have settled and made the UK their home and a number have married British people. The most recent wave is often described as economic migrants - people have come in order to benefit economically from being part of the European Union with the view to returning later on. To what extent that will be the case remains to be seen.

The first set of Poles came to the UK following the outbreak of World War 2. What is not often realised is that, around the time Germany invaded Poland, an agreement had been made with Russia that part of Poland would be given over to them. When Russia entered the War on the side of the Allies, an agreement was then made with the Russians that Poles living in the Russian controlled

part of Poland could come to the Britain in order to fight on the side of the Allies, and many did come and many served with distinction. After the War, with Europe being divided up among the victorious allies, many Poles decided to settle in Britain, choosing to do so rather than return to a land under communist control and preferring the freedom they had come to experience. In the main, this set of Poles over the years became fairly well integrated with British society, a number of whom having settled in Southend. They did, however, often maintain their cultural links by, for example, forming a Polish Association. Most, being Catholic, belonged to Catholic churches and that was often the basis of their social networking, while living in Southend.

Around 1989, when Communist rule was overturned in Poland, there were Poles living in Britain, typically for the purpose of study. Many decided to use the opportunity of the upheaval and the oppression, uncertainty and instability back home to stay in Britain. There are not many from this group now left in Southend. Our third wave of Poles is the Roma community, linked with and often referred to as gypsies. These are from various Eastern European countries, typically Poland and the Czech Republic. There are wide cultural variations within that community, which is far from cohesive. With the breakdown of communism, Romas felt their way of life was threatened and the traditional economic activities e.g. involving horses and scrap dealing took a downturn. Given the antipathy the other surrounding communities held toward the Romas because of their different way of life and a feeling they were untrustworthy etc., many Romas felt their position to be untenable and many sought refuge elsewhere (some of those feelings are to be found now in Southend). Two quite different centres (geographic and cultural) of “Romas” came to Southend to settle, and were, along with refugees from the wars in the Balkans, the main focus for asylum seekers at that time.

While Romas did get leave to stay in the UK, in 2004 when Poland joined the EU, they tended to be less well integrated than others who gained resident status. Some Romas have moved away from Southend, but there is still a sizable Roma community here. For example around 60 Roma children attend schools in Southend and one third of these are in the Milton ward. Roma people tend to keep to their own community, are suspicious of outsiders, and often do not learn English. While they are often seen to be not engaging in services, that is changing and there seem fewer problems and clashes of culture nowadays. They are adaptable regarding work and have strong musical acumen. (One of their music and dance groups will be performing at the 2009 SCHP big summer event.) Some elements are associated with criminal activity, although it is important not to judge on a negative stereotype. The Turning Tides project is making good inroads working with the Roma community. The fourth and final wave of Polish immigration is as a result of Poles being given the right to work and settle in the UK because Poland became a member of the EU in 2004. This is by far the biggest group of Poles. They are often looked upon as being economic migrants.

The Black and Minority Ethnic Report commissioned by Turning Tides, particularly profiles the Polish community as well as other Eastern Europeans, particularly Czech (which have similarities with respect to the language) in the three central Southend wards, although it does less well with the significant Zimbabwean population in these areas when it came to completing fairly in-depth fact-finding questionnaires. Extrapolating from schools data: Kursaal (2.1%), Milton (5.4%), Victoria (1.8%), the percentage of Polish population in these wards is significantly higher than the town average (0.8%). The majority have been living in Southend less than five years. The findings of that report are consistent with the various findings and impressions found in this study and are referred to in order to gain a better understanding. Some of these (and the author concurs) are given below.

While Poles tend to be less well off economically than the overall population, appear to take the lower paid jobs yet with significantly below average rates of unemployment and live in lower standard housing, the report suggests a higher level of general satisfaction with living in Southend than one might expect (even though there are other indications that the satisfaction level falls below the average for the town). They are less likely to press for changes in how services are delivered or changing the neighbourhood in which they live. The tendency is not to engage with their white

British neighbours. They do not feel though they have too many problems with their white British neighbours. While there are concerns over the environment in which they live. There are concerns over alcohol abuse and the excesses of some young people. Law and order is an issue but does not appear to be that much more than might generally be expected. Overall, police are looked on positively, even though they tend not to be engaged with and sometimes crime is not reported.

There does seem, as with many of the other “missing communities” a lower uptake in engaging services, for example - health) and accessing information than the norm. There does appear to be a general lack of awareness in what is available. Being confident in English (spoken and written) is a factor that might hinder this process. Motivation to improve in the English language seems mixed and more effort could be made to learn English, Given the numbers involved, there are many translator services e.g. banks, job agencies and the well used Polish Translator service provided by Southend Borough Council (between the Civic Centre and the Library). We encountered one organisation that advocates on behalf of Poles, who pointed out that there are needs, for example filling in official forms, and when this help is not available people may lose out as a consequence.

We did try to find out a child’s perspective and would have liked to speak with some children. At least two adults mentioned that children tended not to follow their parents concerning their staunch Catholicism. When asked how children did at schools, it seemed they did better and were able to adapt more easily when they attended schools at the start of the school journey, i.e. from Reception class. Some problems occurred when joining later and mixing with other children, and sometimes they were not able to pick up on English fast enough, although some schools helped more than others. One cited problems getting children into Catholic Secondary schools, which often would have been the preferred choice, because they are not known to the priest despite being Catholic.

In terms of Polish associations, we have already referred to the one started by our first wave of Polish immigrants. While quite conservative and not particularly active in recent years, there is evidence this is changing with the new waves (but not Roma though) getting involved. The Polish Saturday School is another social outlet that brings together Polish people who have children. The School provides an extensive cultural programme and teaches the Polish language to children, deemed as important in maintaining cultural identity, especially if there is a desire to return to Poland at a later date. A recent development is the formation of the Polish White Eagle Club. This is run by Polish people, living in Central Southend, and is looking to be active in a whole range of cultural, social and other areas. The recently held “Taste of Poland” event is described elsewhere. Other events are being planned by the Council, which is also considering developing further links with its Polish twin, the northern Baltic seaside resort of Sopot.

### **Zimbabwean**

The arrival of Zimbabweans in the UK (and in other countries of the world) is mostly a consequence of the recent, well-publicised troubles in Zimbabwe. While some of the reasons amount to outright persecution and political oppression (a recurrent theme in a number of the other African countries) much of the rationale behind people leaving that country is to escape the present economic woes and the breakdown of that society. Prior to the current troubles, Zimbabwe was relatively stable with a strong economy and having good services. Educational attainment was high. English is widely spoken, although most Zimbabweans speak one of the two tribal languages: Shona (76%) or Ndebele (18%) as their main language.

While there have been tribal tensions in the past between these two groups, accentuated by pro- and anti-government factions and often exploited for political purposes, there seems little current evidence of this in Southend. There are a few white Zimbabweans living in Southend, who are fairly anglicised, but these were not included in this study. While the UK appears as an attractive destination for Zimbabweans wanting to leave their country, there are other countries that take

refugees, in particular South Africa. Some Zimbabweans come to the UK on a work or study visa or to join relatives; most come as asylum seekers. Claims for asylum tend to take time (often years) to resolve and most are eventually turned down. One senses there is a hope in some official quarters that, should Zimbabwe become stable again, asylum seekers can be sent back.

Southend has an unusually high Zimbabwean population, compared with other parts of the UK, and most of these are asylum seekers or failed asylum seekers. When claims for asylum do fail, most do not return rightaway, hoping to successfully appeal, and because of the situation they would be returning to is considered to be unsafe. Southend, unlike the vast majority of other places in the UK, acts as a magnet by virtue of people coming to it because relatives or tribal acquaintances are already living there. Quite a few, who receive housing support, are subject to being relocated to other parts of the UK, often at very short notice.

The Citizens Advice Bureau recently reported on one asylum seeker lady who had come to them for help, having been evicted from where she was living, and then being taken off to Birmingham at very short notice, the only place where accommodation was available. Another colleague recounted a similar case and the resultant wrench when this happened. As discussed elsewhere, being an asylum seeker can be a difficult situation for most: limited and variable benefits, not being allowed to work etc. An important factor to consider in the Zimbabwean situation is the feelings of responsibility toward the extended family with people often going out of their way to help.

Profiling the Zimbabwean community is a difficult task because of the various issues and aspects affecting different sectors to differing degrees, especially the one of not having a settled or only temporary status. Some, especially if professionally qualified, soon settle and integrate well with life in Southend, but many, especially if carrying the burden of being an asylum seeker, do not. Lack of knowledge of the type of help that is available is widespread. There is sometimes general disempowerment to the extent that people tend not to speak up if dissatisfied with private housing or children's schooling or the service provided by the GP or mistreatment in the workplace.

The author came across five groups of Zimbabweans who wanted to provide a centre and/or a service that will engage with people according to their need and signpost to where help is to be found and stay alongside those affected so their needs can be met. All five groups are doing a little but all said they want to do much more, and also seemed unaware of each other. Two of the professionals we spoke with expressed a view that there are barriers to working together, coming up with a clear plan and turning words into action as well as problems with egos. Yet there appears to be a great opportunity for the local Zimbabwean community to address their own issues. Neither should it be forgotten that the troubles in Zimbabwe are many still and the desire to do something is there.

Of the Zimbabweans who come to Southend, some can't work because they are not allowed to; some work illegally; some take on low paid, menial jobs as this is the only work available to them and a few do the work for which they are qualified. While most who come do so as asylum seekers and are usually not allowed to work, others come for the various legitimate reasons allowed. Those who are able to work often take lowly jobs, e.g. in the care industry or factory work. There are examples of exploitation. Some have settled well, especially if able to work. While the impression is that Zimbabweans live peaceably with their neighbours as a whole, there tends also to be a suspicion of outsiders. While there were cases of overt racism, many did not feel there was a real problem. One person felt she had been discriminated against when applying for jobs although there is a feeling there may be a cultural barrier and "chip on your shoulder" attitude that could have contributed. Another person changed her son's school because of racist incidents.

One of the persons we interviewed spoke passionately about maintaining the good aspects of Zimbabwean culture while at the same time integrating within the host community. He cites the predicament of gangs of Zimbabwean youths that have not fully engaged with either and who could

grow up disaffected, not having strong roots. He also mentioned concerns over mental health, which is not surprising given the journey many have undertaken, and when these are seen by representatives of statutory health services they are not always dealt with appropriately. He felt there was a need for more psycho-therapy inputs as opposed to bio-medical interventions.

During the course of the investigation, we spoke with Terrence Higgins Trust (THT) around the HIV / AIDS issues affecting Africans in general and Zimbabweans in particular. The picture that seems to unfold, while showing that many are affected and many do engage with services if appropriate, there are many who do not. Many do not know what is available or their entitlement. Quite likely this is not so dissimilar to the national picture (as detailed in the plan of action to meet HIV prevention needs of Africans living in England referred to previously). There are some, including in Southend, who suffer and die, having not been treated. It was interesting that most of the current case load of the THT Case Worker concern Zimbabwean clients. The THT message of HIV prevention by having safe sex, including use of condoms, is not particularly well received in that community, given the Christian teaching that sex should only take place within the marriage union. While some engagement has taken place with Zimbabwean pastors, there is scope for more working together to address issues of common concern.

One of the important, not always appreciated, factors among the Zimbabwean communities is the part played by religion, in particular Christianity, often Pentecostal in emphasis and the respect paid to the pastors. While there may be some unusual practices and an (in the opinion of some) unhealthy preoccupation with a leadership hierarchy, from what we can make out the Zimbabwean churches would be considered, in the main, sound in doctrine, exuberant on worship and earnest in the attention given to practising the faith. A minority of Zimbabwean Christians join with existing white dominated established churches. Of the two Zimbabwean pastors we spoke with, one church group was meeting in a school but had shortly to move out and needed their own building for an extensive programme of activities. The other was meeting in the building of a Baptist Church in the town. Both wanted to do more to help with the social needs of their community.

One of the issues that became apparent during the research is the incidences of domestic violence within the Zimbabwean (and other ethnic minority) communities. Most of these go unreported because of the strong cultural taboos preventing disclosure. Zimbabwean men, like many African men, tend to take a more dominant role in the family. Coming to the UK can be a culture shock in more ways than one, and there is a feeling that their role is being undermined by being in such a disempowered position. While this is not offered as an excuse, it can form part of the explanation.

An additional dimension to the issues of female exploitation came though meeting Betty Makoni, who has received international acclaim through the setting up of the "Girl Child Network". Her writings, including her website ([www.gcn.org.zw](http://www.gcn.org.zw)), point to some unimaginable examples of exploitation beginning with the girl child, not just in Africa but carried across to the UK too. How widespread these issues are, it is not possible to say and it would be unfair to generalise. However, there are issues in Southend, including those of sexual exploitation and even slavery, but the closed nature of some of that community means these are not captured.

### **Malayalee**

There have been Malayalees residing in Southend for many years now, for example working as doctors in our local hospital, but the majority have arrived in the past 8 years, notably as a result of a recruitment campaign by Southend and Basildon hospitals to recruit nurses from overseas in order to address staffing shortages. This began with recruiting from the Philippines and after that from India, although the majority of nurses coming over were from Kerala state (population 32 million), where the main language spoken is Malayalam, although English is an official language that is widely spoken and most of the better schools are English medium.

Kerala has high levels of literacy (in parts of Kerala it is 100% and therefore higher than in Southend) with a far greater than average number of graduates and those with professional qualifications than those from other Indian states. However, Kerala's economy lags behind much of the rest of India making the prospect of working overseas very attractive, which is why most of the Malayalees come to Britain in the first place. While the majority religion of Kerala (as with the rest of India) is Hinduism (56%), there are sizable Muslim (24%) and Christian (19%) populations.

Most of the Malayalees who come to Southend are Christian, and most of those are practising Catholics, many of whom regularly attend masses in their own language and as is often the case this also provides an opportunity for social networking. Those who come over to the UK mostly have a good grasp of the English language and this quickly improves through use and a determination to learn. Typically what happens is that the women come over (alone) to work (often on a nursing contract), followed later by their husbands and children. The husbands are often well educated and professionally qualified themselves but often are content to take low paid / grade jobs to support the main earner and supplement the family income.

As to whether the Malayalees who come over to the UK are here to stay remains an open question. Some have ideas of returning to India (most have homes and families to return to). Others are resolved to settle in the UK, including taking up British citizenship. Most maintain strong family ties with their own country and there is regular travelling between the two countries. The extended family (in the UK and India) is also important when it comes to child care arrangements.

One of the interesting developments, and one in which this project has played a small part, is that members of this community have formed their own Southend Malayalee Association. They have taken advice, from SAVS and others, and have done something not many of the other newer ethnic minority communities have managed. They are a properly constituted organisation, well organised and with a good programme of activities, and have been able to gain funding for some of its activities. They have put on a number of cultural events, primarily Kerala and Malayalam related, including activities for the children, and this has attracted a lot of outside interest.

The author attended and enjoyed two recent such events and was impressed with the warmth and purpose. They have also taken part in the SCHP Big Summer Event. Two of their own events in the past year have been attended by Southend's mayor. The association seeks to encourage a celebration and maintenance of the Malayalee culture yet there is also an awareness that it needs to serve the whole community and a desire to get involved. Sadly (from a duplication of resources point of view), there is another recently constituted Malayalee association having similar objectives.

The author's impression of the Malayalee community in Southend is that they are mainly quite harmonised yet they are trying to be outward looking. Some indeed choose to focus their social networking outside of the Malayalee community. Many do seek to develop friendships and good relationships with the "host" community, although there is a tendency to associate more with their own community. They have good awareness of what is going on in the world at large and at a local level. They value education. For example, most of the children seem to be doing well in school. Most speak Malayalam in the home although this is likely to change as people adapt to the host culture. While there may be some lack of awareness of services available in the community, this is less of an issue compared with the other communities profiled.

Malayalees tend to be hard working and peace loving and it likely that the one issue that concerns them most while living in Southend is that of lawlessness. Given the way Malayalees have generally adapted to life in the UK and their contribution to the UK economy and sense of civic pride and community responsibility, they might be seen as models for community cohesion and integration. The term "missing" may not now be particularly apt as the Malayalees, despite often choosing to socialise among their own community, are looking to get involved in the wider community and to a large extent succeeding, and are doing well living in Southend.

## **Chapter 6: Individual case studies**

Case studies are often provided to illustrate particular points. Seven case studies are presented here. Between them, they highlight many of the issues and concerns among our missing communities, even though we could have presented more. We have tried to be as diverse as we could because of the range of issues involved. Those profiled are from seven different countries: Finland, Kosovo, Turkey, Angola, Eritrea, South Africa and India. Five are men; two are women. We have used fictional names but all the other essential details are correct.

### **Ivan's story**

Ivan is from Finland. He came over by car with his wife and three children in 1999, with a shared intention of starting a new life as a family. They were both free spirits and loved to travel, looking for an opportunity to escape the regimented way of life found in Finland. In their younger years they travelled around India and at one time Ivan volunteered to help in a Mother Teresa home. Being of a more philosophical disposition, Ivan was concerned with finding answers to life meanings. While he had a church background, he was not religious. Ivan's wife being an IT expert, it was agreed that she would find work in that field while Ivan stayed at home and found lower status jobs to supplement the family income, using his practical skills. To an extent, this arrangement worked at first. They were both resolved to become integrated into the local community and did not pay much attention to their ethnic minority status.

Later on, Ivan began to develop mental health problems. While he did go to a psychiatric hospital, he did not receive the help he needed. Ivan was a reluctant patient and this was not helped by his then limited grasp of English. He was discharged from the service with his needs unmet. Ivan later began to take drugs and he also manifested big swings in mood. The tensions in the family home eventually became too much and he moved out. His condition deteriorated as his dependence on alcohol and drugs increased. Latterly, he would be seen begging in Southend High Street while presenting himself as a rough sleeper, even though he did have accommodation (albeit quite dire) to return to. Early in 2009 Ivan died of a drug overdose. At his memorial service, which was attended by his family and those who knew Ivan on the streets, including some of the Street Pastors, came and paid their respects and some were able to share positive reports from their meetings with Ivan during his final days. (The memorial service was arranged because of the relationship Ivan had with some of the Street Pastors and members of the "SOS group", described elsewhere in the project.)

### **Peter's story**

Peter and his brother, along with their wives and children came to Southend in the early 1990's, from Kosovo (Albanian speaking). They had been caught up in the wars taking place and had experience of some of the atrocities that took place. As with a number of their compatriots, they sought and found refuge in the UK. Overall, Peter's experience adapting to life in his new home (although nowadays he visits Kosovo each year and maintains close contact with family there) is positive. He is grateful for the help he received in those early days and the practical kindness shown. While it was his intention to learn English through attending classes, he abandoned this idea early on (although he did pick up the language, which is, these days, perfect) because he wanted to concentrate on working so he could support his family.

Not only did Peter find work but he also managed, along with his brother, to set up a successful car valet business, which employs several persons. Most of his employees are of Eastern European origin, although this was not intentional. He found that the people he employs are hard working and adaptable to working unsocial hours, not something he found, as a whole, with English people. He is keen to give something back to the community and for a while served as president of the Albanian Society. He is keen to encourage those in a similar predicament to what he had been in. He is anxious to curb the tendency of some young Albanians to adopt a dependency culture rather

than one of hard work. His family are settled in the UK and fairly happy with life in Southend. He supports his local church. His children are doing well in local secondary schools.

### **Danny's story**

Danny, aged 35, is from Turkey. He came to the UK 8 years ago to marry his English wife. His brother, to whom he was very close, was killed in violent circumstances because he withstood corruption, and it was felt he should leave because of his involvement. He had a son but later split from his wife. He later had another son through another relationship. He managed to hold down a fairly responsible job for five years and took pride and did well in it. Because of racially linked abuse from colleagues he eventually decided to leave. Because of his poor grasp of English, lack of understanding of his entitlements and he was suffering from depression at the time, he found himself without a home (sleeping rough or on the sofas of friends) and not accessing benefits.

Danny later did get benefits (currently "Incapacity" due to his poor health) and was able to find some low standard accommodation (all that is available given his situation). Danny would like to leave but has nowhere better to go. Danny does not take drugs, although drug taking is rife around him. He does drink alcohol (but claims he never gets drunk). Danny still suffers depression and he finds it difficult to get himself motivated. Danny is sad that he cannot see either of his children and desires to be part of a normal family where he can feel good about himself and have a meaningful role to play. He has family in Turkey, who he has feelings for, but does not get in contact (partly due to feelings of shame). Danny takes part in the SOS project (described elsewhere).

### **Pedro's story**

Pedro comes from Angola and is Portugese speaking. As a young man he was caught up in the civil war going on and was conscripted to serve in the army. Because he did not wish to kill his own people, he fled the country and sought asylum in the UK, around 1995. He was eventually granted permanent leave to stay. He is married with a young child and lives in Southend. While he has good academic qualifications, he works stacking supermarket shelves. He is planning to take a degree in engineering and establish himself in a new career and improve his prospects. Given he is fairly well settled, he often finds himself advocating on behalf of the Portugese speaking community in Southend. He is able to do so because of his knowledge of English and other skills that enables him to engage with the system. Many of the Portugese speakers have a poor grasp of English and do not avail themselves of the opportunity to learn English. Many have a low quality of life in Southend.

Pedro is often called to translate and this is important because it could involve completing important documentation, the outcome of which has an important bearing on the lives of those who his trying to help. The Angolan community in Southend is small (say less than 30) and there are among them those who have gone underground because of their failed immigration status, including working illegally in local restaurants. Among the larger Portugese community, who have the right to stay because of their EU status, there are many instances of need and distress, which Pedro tries to help resolve. As a self-appointed advocate he carries much of what he needs on his person, although he would love to have a base from which to work. He has received limited support from Southend Borough Council and Southend Library to carry on this work.

### **David's story**

David, aged 25, came to the UK in 2004 from Eritrea. His parents were from neighbouring Ethiopia but had settled in Eritrea, which had been part of Ethiopia prior to 1993. David's parents died while he was a child and he was looked after by his sister. It later transpired that the Eritrean government wanted to deport David and his sister back to Ethiopia, which is something they did not want to happen because of the unfavourable conditions that they would have to face, so they went underground to evade capture. Later his sister became involved as a student in a political protest movement but was captured and likely killed by the authorities. Soon after that David fled the

country and after a long and arduous journey came to the UK, where he claimed asylum. While his claim was being dealt with he was given accommodation and limited support but this was withdrawn when the claim was rejected and David was told he had to return to Ethiopia.

Around that time, David became involved with a Christian group and he became a Christian. He received limited support from friends, although his status and the uncertainty of his situation made him depressed and he attempted suicide at one time. In order to stay in the UK, he tried to falsify documents as a desperate measure, but was found out and was sent to prison. He was later released and received into accommodation in Southend, run by a Christian trust, where he is now living. David is currently appealing against his deportation on religious persecution grounds. He is frustrated over the limitations there are on his movements (strictly he is not even allowed to work as a volunteer). He still gets depressed but is grateful for opportunities to do useful things like help out at a project that is serving vulnerable people (which is much valued) and the kindness of his friends.

### **Sally's story**

Sally is a 25 year old black South African lady, who came to the UK 5 years ago with the hope she could stay. Part of her reason for coming was to escape sexual abuse in her own country. While in England she met a man and lived with him, and they had a child. Soon after her child was born she began to experience domestic violence and decided to leave that relationship, although it was not easy. However, also around that time her request to stay in this country was turned down and with it many of the support and benefits she might have otherwise expected. Through the intervention of agencies that provided her support that might not normally be strictly be available, given current statutory guidelines, and the help of friends, she has managed to live and look after her little girl. Sally is fearful and anxious, not knowing how things are going to turn out. She is suspicious of statutory agencies and strangers. She (and her child) does not engage with health services unless in an emergency. In order make money, she has resorted to prostitution and is susceptible to exploitation by unscrupulous persons. There are other aspects of her life she has not yet disclosed.

### **Julie's story**

Julie is a 39 year old Indian (Malayalee) lady, who came to the UK in 1994 in order to marry her English husband. Three of the things that particular struck her when she came to the UK were the cold weather, the plain food and the TV soap: Eastenders. She quickly made lasting friends and soon sought work in the field in which she had trained - nursing. Like many professionals from overseas, she found this was not easy, for at the time her qualifications were not recognised and she needed to do an adaptation course in order to practise. Retraining was an expensive option and hospitals did not then offer adaptation training. She was a little frustrated in the differences in culture; this experience showed her that in the UK people tend to be polite, promise much but often not deliver, whereas in India people tend to be less polite, promise little but deliver on what they say. She was eventually able to do an adaption course through working in an elderly nursing home and obtained the important PIN number needed to practise. Although she had a break to have a baby, she was able to practise hospital nursing and now has a senior position at Southend Hospital.

During her time here, she saw the influx of foreign nurses, firstly Filipinos and then Indians (usually Malayalees), and befriended a number. Because of the friendships and other contacts she made with the host community (e.g. through neighbours, church, school and work) most of her social connections are with non-Malayalees. She is now well settled in the UK and has gained an honours degree and is now working toward her Masters. She tries to visit her family in India each year and maintains regular contact. She has a son, now aged 11. She is delighted that he is doing well at school and is shortly to go to the local grammar school. As an outside interest, she enjoys cooking (English and Indian) and often caters at functions. While she is mindful of her cultural identity, this is not something she has imposed on her son. She recognises the importance of getting involved in the host community and adapting to the situation around her and has managed to successfully do so.

## Chapter 7: St Lukes - engaging with the local community

One of the notable trends that became apparent while engaging with Southend Borough Council, South East Essex PCT and Southend Together for the purpose of this project, is the recognition being given to the importance of the local community, typically at ward level, for example in terms of engagement with residents to find out what they think and in profiling the needs and available resources - such as churches, schools, GP surgeries and other amenities. One of the priorities of Southend Together is to invite residents to “make your voice heard” to discuss services and priorities, and the working out of the Local Area Agreement (LAA), and to do so through “Community Voices” meetings, although still in its infancy. For this purpose, Southend has been divided into four areas (it used to be three). While not aimed specifically at meeting the needs of our missing communities, what happens as a result of these engagements could have a significant impact. What is not always apparent is there are often existing structures that could be rationalised and invited to feed in to these agendas. In this chapter, we have chosen to profile the St. Lukes ward, because it is the one the author has the most knowledge, due to his being a resident.

### Cluny Residents Association (CRA)

The author lives close to Cluny Square, which is often seen the epicentre of the St. Lukes ward. It has over the years achieved notoriety because of the prevalence of anti-social behaviour and other issues linked to deprivation. St. Lukes has just over an average number of BME residents, although pockets have 20-30% BME residents. There are wide variations in resident profile in the ward. The area around Cluny Square is in the top 10% from among deprived areas in the Eastern region. From his own perspective, most of the issues facing the area are not particularly BME related. There had been discussions about residents associating together to address local issues and in August 2006 the Cluny Residents Association (CRA), to address issues around community cohesion, and the author became its chair. This was supported by South Essex Homes given the large amount of social housing in the area (e.g. Cluny House, Sutton Court, Temple Court). There is not much by way of nearby private rented accommodation, although many nearby private dwellings, including Council houses brought under the “right to buy” scheme. The CRA has been instrumental in bringing about several beneficial changes, which include those that have led to a reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour (still a major concern), improving the homes and living environment of South Essex Homes tenants and other residents, working with other agencies to improve the area, and adding new facilities, such as improved better CCTV coverage, flower planting and football nets.

The work is ongoing and there is much that still needs to and can be done. Still most residents are not actively involved, especially from the Tower Blocks, where the needs are greatest, but CRA is known and appreciated and its events are well supported (over 300 people turned up to its recent “Carols in the Park”, and 200 at its recent Easter Egg hunt), including several from our missing communities. The recent award of £5000 from the Grassroots fund will enable it to put on further community events, support local community horticulture schemes and buy a range cooker for the recently re-opened community café. The key to effective working in the St. Luke’s ward is the spirit of partnership and willingness to work together by local community activists and the outstanding commitment and goodwill of those who are involved (despite representing a variety of interests and types of personality). While there is some duplication, partly due to historical reasons, there is also an attempt to reduce this. Many of the community activists are involved in several of the following:

### Organisations operating in St. Lukes

1. *Cluny Residents Association* - as detailed above.
2. *St. Luke’s Partnership* - began around the time the regeneration agenda was beginning to be unrolled (around 1999) and the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) community shop project started up in the area, situated in the parade of shops in Cluny Square. It has had a chequered history but these days acts more as an umbrella organisation and a network facilitator.

3. ***Peartree Residents Association*** - is another residents association that is very active in the community and supportive of the particular needs of the residents it serves. As a result of both Peartree and CRA wanting to put on further social events for local residents an entertainments committee has been formed, comprising members of both associations.
4. ***South Essex Homes*** - have supported both CRA and Peartree residents, by providing small grants, releasing officers to attend meetings and providing resident and admin support.
5. ***Neighbourhood policing*** - (based at Temple Sutton School) provide strong links to the local community at grass roots level. These have been instrumental in facilitating Community Circles (bringing together individuals to share issues) and Neighbourhood Action Panels (identifying issues and priorities) - which is about to be incorporated into the St. Lukes Partnership.
6. ***The local faith communities*** - (Ferndale Baptist Church and St. Lukes Parish Church) who are active in many ways serving the community. The recent opening of a community café is an initiative of Ferndale Baptist Church. Both churches have recently developed their premises and these are extensively used for local community activities. Love Southend Youth, which brings together church linked youngsters in the town, have helped in a number of community projects.
7. ***The local schools*** - (Cecil Jones College and Temple Sutton Primary) both have a strong community ethos. Temple Sutton has been at the forefront of addressing opportunities under the Extended Schools scheme, for example supporting a well developed Children's Centre.
8. ***St. Luke's Healthy Living Centre*** - Community Interest Company (CIC) came about as a result of another community initiative based around Temple Sutton School. The first major project is the setting up a Healthy Living Centre, which if all goes to plan will make a strong impact on the area's health needs. It is planning other projects, such as supporting local business start ups.
9. ***St. Edmunds Hall*** - this is a well used facility, rescued by the local community when Southend Borough Council decided not to support some of the town's community centres.
10. ***Connexions*** - based in one of the shops in Cluny Square is active in serving and engaging with youngsters in the area and have been very supportive of community projects.
11. ***Southend Adult Community College (SACC)*** - have been active in trying to put on courses for residents (often free), working with the varying organisations in the area.
12. ***Local Councillors*** - (currently two Conservative and one Labour) have been supportive of and involved with the various activities described above. They have taken up issues that have been presented to them by local residents. Local Councillors are particularly useful to help gain access to the officers of Southend Borough Council, although it should be noted that these days most Council officers are approachable and try to respond to needs when they can.
13. ***Other Organisations*** - including well established Neighbourhood Watch schemes and the beginnings of other resident associations in other parts of the Ward.
14. ***Youth Council*** - This is based in St. Lukes Ward, in a building in Stornoway Road. The potential for the Youth Council in the life of Southend and its missing communities (and St. Lukes Ward) is great. The Youth Council has been involved in SCHP Big Summer Events.

### **The way ahead**

This suggests a more idyllic way of working than is in fact the case. Getting results requires hard work and those involved pulling together. It is remarkable how well the various organisations do work together. While many residents do not engage, particularly from our missing communities, all benefit from the results. The general experience is that getting things done takes a lot longer to achieve than one might hope, yet there have been many outcomes that have benefitted the local community, as detailed above. The current paradigm suggests there is a lot more to come. The regeneration of a local community, once one of the main watchwords in the town, is possible, but often there are many things, small and large, that need to take place for it to be achieved. Notwithstanding the non-participation of some of our missing communities, what has gone on in St. Luke's may be offered as a model, albeit far from perfect, to use in community engagement. The groups described above can be instruments of further beneficial changes to that area.

## **Chapter 8: Working with the Statutory Sector**

It was clear from the outset of the project that in order to find about our missing communities and then serve them, we would need to build good links with the Statutory Sector, especially as they have the money, resources, remit and influence that could help our missing communities.

### **Southend Together**

Southend Together is the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) responsible for the implementation of the Local Area Agreement (LAA). This governs the goals and priorities of the various statutory agencies, in particular Southend Borough Council (SBC), Essex Police, Fire Service and South East Essex PCT, and any organisation in the VCS that wishes to engage with it. Under the LSP are a number of committees, including those mentioned below, responsible for delivering on different aspects of the LAA. The author has taken part, realising the strategic importance (it turned out to be productive), but has concerns over issues of tokenism, expecting VCS participation for free, not involving the right people e.g. those having to work, not addressing the issues raised in this report and being self-congratulatory. As yet the VCS engage only in a limited way in service procurement.

### **Southend Borough Council (SBC)**

SBC would be deemed as the major player when it comes to delivering services to our BME communities, given that its sphere of influence touches on most of the key issues. Working with SBC to support our missing communities was an important priority, made possible by the evident increased desire to work with outside agencies, including ourselves. One has a hope and a concern that SBC do not merely do what they have to do but they do what needs to be done. The author has been, on the whole, greatly indebted to SBC colleagues for their cooperation during this project.

### ***Equalities Board***

The author sat on this board during the period of the project and continues to do so, along with other external agencies with an interest in the six diversity strands: age, gender, race, faith, disability and sexuality. He was able to contribute toward the task of ensuring SBC delivers on its equality and diversity goals, even though (in his view) it still has some way to go. But it is moving in the right direction, evidenced by it achieving Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government.

### ***Data Observatory Group***

From the beginning, it became evident that the principal challenge was to gather quality information but the project did not have the capacity to make major inroads. However, it also became clear that bits of information are scattered all over the place and by many organisations, as well as there being many gaps. There was also duplication in effort in producing similar data and a lack of awareness in many quarters of what data is out there. The author was happy to join the Data Observatory group because of its commitment to data sharing and making quality data available. While it is clear there is much to do and his dream of a comprehensive profile of our missing communities and their issues e.g. housing may be elusive, our participation in this group, for example attending meetings, providing input and supporting funding bids, has helped to move this agenda forward.

### ***Census Group***

One of the big complaints in Southend is that not only was the local population under-counted to the tune of 16,000 people in the 2001 census but it lost around £50million in central government funding as a result. It is likely that the harder to reach groups were those missed out, besides which the profile of the Southend's missing communities will have changed significantly since that time. The author was happy to be part of this group, realising that by taking appropriate action early on and lending our expertise and connections we can help prepare better for the 2011 census. In terms of project outcomes, getting an accurate census result will both attract more money to the town, thus allowing for better service delivery, and will better inform us regarding our missing communities. Getting people to co-operate in the Census could also be seen to be promoting civic pride.

### ***Community Cohesion***

SBC want to make Southend a more cohesive community and there is Central Government and other pressure for this to happen. The SBC Cohesion Team is in the centre of what is going on to further those aims. Their ambitious remit is to ensure appropriate and adequate delivery of services across all sections of the community, ensure quality of life for all residents of Southend and to address current inequalities and to create and maintain a community that gets on well together. Questions like “how do you feel people get on in your neighbourhood?” and “how satisfied are you with the area in which you live?” are those they are particularly being looked at (apparently Southend responds less well on this than the National average, with the Central Southend wards, not surprisingly, doing worse still). The SBC Cohesion team intend to support our 2009 summer event and use it to unveil the long awaited SBC Cohesion Strategy. There has been significant interaction between SBC’s Cohesion Team and this project including sharing of information and practically supporting each other. It is hoped that they will be able to act on some of the findings of this report.

### ***Other***

During the course of this work, we have had to liaise with a number of different departments within the Council, for example to do with housing, and this has mostly proved fruitful. The author was able to participate in an SBC conference looking at the strategic direction of the town that fed into the LSP and LAA and was put forward as the interim BME Action Group member on the Southend Together Board but later stepped down. He also took part in the Stronger Communities board. He is looking forward to joining the working group looking at helping people with “chaotic lifestyles”. Mention should be made of elected councillors. During the course of the project a number were approached on various issues (and have been acknowledged). No doubt members of the Council have an important part to play to address some of the issues affecting our missing communities.

### ***Southend Library and Southend Adult Community College***

Our interactions with Southend Library and Southend Adult Community College are described elsewhere in the report. Both come under the Council. Their respective roles in addressing the information and learning needs of our missing communities remain crucial. Engaging with staff from both services have formed an essential part in delivering the aims of this project. The enthusiasm and commitment of those involved have led to fruitful relationships.

### ***South Essex Homes (SEH)***

South Essex Homes do not strictly fall into the “statutory” category but are included here because of the close relationship they have with the Council. SEH are an arms length management organisation (ALMO) that manages most of SBC’s stock of social housing. Besides linking with SEH regarding the author’s work with his local residents association (discussed elsewhere) we have discussed issues of common concern, such as isolation experienced by SEH tenants and the profile of its residents, especially regarding ethnicity. We took part in the SEH BME group. We were able to look at some of the data produced - the relatively low take up of social housing by BME residents (4-5%) helped to inform concerns over housing. SEH could also play a part in moving forward the homeless agenda, partnering with some in networks we are involved with, for example the possible use of homeless hostels in order to house those needing help, who do not satisfy SBC’s criteria.

### ***Essex Police***

We were helped by police officers in the early stages of the project to identify some of the issues around the community. Essex Police continue to significantly support our Big Summer Event. Engaging with our missing communities seems to be an important police aim. Toward the end of our research, we met with the team dealing with Race Hate crime and Domestic Violence. While not much new came out of this other than confirming both types of crime were under reported, there are significantly more cases of Domestic Violence reported than Race Hate incidents. It was noted that there has been an increase in BME related domestic violence incidents although this group is even less likely to report these. The way was left open for further working together. The work of the

multi-agency, Police led Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) and the Hate Crime Panel could yet be significant in addressing these gaps, and more work is needed.

### **Essex Fire and Rescue**

The Fire Service has always been supportive of SCHP and its Big Summer Event. Some exchanges took place during the research to explore how to bring the message of community safety and fire prevention to our missing communities, something that concerns the Fire Service.

### **Health**

As discussed elsewhere, we did engage with South East Essex PCT regarding health issues among our missing communities. Having spoken with two PCT directors involved with commissioning services, we could see the possibilities, particularly for the VCS, to provide new services for our missing communities, which they would do well to follow up, although a word of caution is needed - while getting money from statutory health has long been the bugbear of many a VCS organisation who is delivering on NHS targets, one remains sceptical as to what extent the system for making this happen has improved significantly. Part of their strategy is to provide services linked to geographical areas which show a high IMD index at ward level. This could be good news for some of our missing communities, but does suggest that post code lottery is not entirely done away with, given a diversity of need. It seems that the comment that one commissioner made that the VCS needed to pool resources and work together more in order to partner with the PCT in delivering services is a valid one. Regarding the author's meetings in the early days with the PCT diversity committee, while he felt this was a useful opportunity, the fact these no longer meet begs the question how issues around BME community engagement discussed then are being addressed now?

Regarding Southend Hospital, the author engaged with two people responsible for implementing the equality and diversity agenda of the hospital, and was struck by the enthusiasm and acumen shown. Those fruitful exchanges helped to inform this study. Not only do our missing communities use services provided by the hospital but many work there, from senior management and consultant level to, what is more common, the lower grade jobs. While there has been good recent progress in addressing equality and diversity issues, there may still be some way to go to fully address the spirit of the current legislation. Further improvements may depend partly on how resources are deployed.

Regarding South Essex Partnership Trust (SEPT), we did not engage much with them concerning the mental health issues that exist among our missing communities (although they do work with the Southend Mind Reason project and see that as a key part of what they want to do). Mental health inequalities among BME communities are well documented and there are clear local needs. For example, studies show some alarming discrepancies e.g. the high rate of schizophrenia among Afro-Caribbean men and the traumatic journeys, resulting in mental health issues, which have been taken by some, prior to them arriving in Southend, and then adjusting to an alien culture (shown in three of the Case Studies included in this report). There is a need therefore to explore these issues further.

### **Other Statutory Organisations**

We did have some contact with the UK Borders Agency (discussed under Immigration) and there are issues that could be followed up. We did not engage with the Probation Service, or any other part of the criminal justice system (other than the Police) for that matter, for the purpose of this research, but recognise it might have been useful to do so. For the purpose of this investigation, we were aware of a number of other statutory organisations that have a bearing on our missing communities, e.g. the Environment Agency, various tax and benefits agencies, JobSeekerPlus. While no doubt relevant, these have not been contacted. As yet we have not engaged with central government or government departments on the issues arising out of the project but SCHP as an organisation does have good relations with the two Southend Members of Parliament and, it is hoped that issues discussed in this report will be taken up in due course. Finally, we also engaged with South East Essex College, realising they attract many from our missing communities.

## **Chapter 9: Working with the Voluntary Sector**

SCHP have from its outset been engaging with different groups in the voluntary and community sector (VCS), covering a full range of issues. Many are referred to in this report along with how what they do has a bearing on our missing communities. Faith communities and groups set up to address BME issues or communities are considered in their own separate chapters but are all part of Southend's vibrant VCS. It is widely recognised that a strong VCS can (and do) bring about enormous benefits to the wider community and be extremely cost effective. However, the need to empower, build capacity in and safeguard the independence of the VCS remains an important issue.

### **Southend Association of Voluntary Services (SAVS)**

It would not be an exaggeration to say this is the leading voluntary organisation in Southend and one that most of the statutory agencies refer to when that matter of partnering with the VCS arises. It offers a wide range of resources to assist Southend's Voluntary Sector and can act as an umbrella covering VCS organisations, including those which are serving and wanting to serve our missing communities. For the purpose of this project the following has been relevant:

- Regularly receiving information on what is going on among voluntary sector partners
- Communicating with the Funding Officer in order to identify key people among our missing communities and in order to help understand their issues
- Communicating with the Partnership Officer over issues, especially those to do with BME communities and homelessness, including taking part in each others meetings
- Conversations with senior personnel, sharing concerns and exchanging information

### **Turning Tides Neighbourhood Management Partnership**

Under SAVS, the remit of Turning Tides is to improve the quality of life for people in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods and ensure services providers are more responsive to neighbourhood needs and improve their delivery. They cover, specifically, parts of the three Central Southend wards. The impact they have is immense. From the perspective of this project, they have:

- Been involved in past SCHP events and intend to do so again
- Provided limited funding to groups - pioneered "Participatory Budgeting" in Southend
- Assisted this project by showing and explaining the various "hot spots" on their patch, in particular this has been gained by walking the streets with neighbourhood wardens
- Produced two reports, already referred to, very relevant for our research
- Provided a number of links to the Polish community (but not as yet Zimbabwean)
- Helped to advance the cause of "missing communities", e.g. the Storehouse project

### **Southend Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)**

Besides being involved in issues described elsewhere, in particular asylum seeking, their importance to our missing communities by doing what their title says: advising citizens (including asylum seekers) is valuable. During the course of the project there have been a number of interactions with CAB and, given the support and advice needs of our missing communities that still need to be met, they are likely to continue to have a significant part to play.

### **Other groups**

Other groups that SCHP have engaged with, not mentioned elsewhere in this report, include:

- CRI - supporting people with a drug issues, connected to the criminal justice system
- Disability Information and Advice Line (DIAL) regarding disability issues
- Essex Flood Forum regarding flooding issues, although in our case - community activism
- Family Mosaic - supporting people in the community
- South East Essex Older Peoples Advocacy regarding issues to do with the elderly
- Southend Womens Aid - supporting women who are the victims of domestic violence

## **Chapter 10: Working with the faith communities**

While it should be reiterated that SCHP does not promote any particular faith, and has successfully worked with and will continue to work with members of all faiths and none, the importance and relevance of faith, in particular concerning our missing communities, is high. Of all the community groups: resident, ethnic, special interest etc. the faith communities are especially significant.

### **The Christian Faith Community**

This is by far the largest among faith communities, there being over 80 churches plus a number of Christian based organisations in Southend. The churches represented a whole cross section of Christendom: from Catholic and Orthodox to Evangelical, Independent, Liberal and Pentecostal. A relatively new phenomena in Southend is the emergence of (often lively) Black churches, which often do not as yet engage fully with what the other churches are doing, although the converse is also true. There is a need to improve those links and to help in providing premises. Many in our missing communities join with one or other of these churches and are often more influenced by what is taught and goes on in their church than anywhere else.

Besides taking care of the needs of members and doing things like teach and pray, many do look out for the welfare of our missing communities and, usually, regardless whether or not the people being helped subscribe to the church. Often churches do not engage with statutory organisations other than in a basic way, although there are exceptions. There are many opportunities to partner as this report indicates, but barriers such as difference in culture and expectations remain to be addressed. Often churches do not make the most of the opportunities that do exist, even though much is accomplished. What is not often realised is that many well known organisations in the town e.g. YMCA, HARP, Fairhavens, Trust Links, were begun by Christians as an expression of their faith in order to meet specific needs and gaps in services. Some have commented that these have lost some of the original heart because the early strong Christian ethos has since been diluted, partly as a consequence of becoming dependent on public funding and the need felt to guard against any accusation of proselytising. When speaking to several Christian leaders, while often aware of the opportunity to serve their communities, and of the statutory agendas, they are also aware of the tensions that could arise as a result of trying to maintain their Christian ethos and church vision. Yet it is only a minority of the church ministers and members who engage in wider social activism.

### **Ongoing work that affects our missing communities**

The following, all of which the author has had varying degrees of involvement are offered by way of example of activities undertaken by Christian faith communities (the list is far from exhaustive):

- Storehouse - working among the homeless but also providing a community resource, based around the community centre in Coleman Street - led by the Vineyard
- Cluny Community Café in Cluny Square - led by Ferndale Baptist Church
- A project started by “Church from Scratch” to do with setting up social enterprises
- A project started by Kings Church around debt counselling
- Options - a pregnancy advice service (from a pro-life perspective)
- The recent building extensions to St. Lukes and St. Andrews C of E churches, which are now being used as resources for the benefit of the wider community
- A number of other established churches, especially Baptist, engaged in community activism
- The work of All Saints C of E church supporting people with mental health issues
- Barnbus and Route 1 - projects that are serving young people; Street Pastors
- The Ark Project and New Start (housing)
- The Healing Rooms - bringing emotional and physical healing to those who need it
- Housing and other community outreach undertaken by Southend Christian Fellowship
- Support to asylum seekers given by some of the Black churches
- Support provided to the Malayalee and Polish communities by the Catholic churches
- Support provide to the Greek Orthodox church to the Greek community

### **Engaging with the Christian Faith Community**

The author engaging emanates firstly from his being involved with a small non-conformist chapel in Coleman Street, just besides the Queensway estate, in the town centre, an area that contains a high level of social deprivation. Besides attending to many of the commonly recognised activities that occupy most churches, e.g. prayer, worship, preaching, teaching, communion and mission, members of the Chapel are conscious of its original vision (109 years ago) to serve the people surrounding the chapel, which then (as now) were predominantly “working class” and often socially disadvantaged. Because the numbers involved at the Chapel are these days few and mainly elderly, there is a limit to what can be done, yet groups like “Parents and Tots” and “Open House” exist, as well as making the building available for community activities, and thereby in small practical ways it is able to serve the local community. More significantly, the cumulative efforts of many of the 80 plus churches in Southend that also serve their nearby communities are no doubt very significant. The people who often benefit most from these efforts are our missing communities.

Besides being involved with his own church, he is also involved in the wider Christian faith community scene. Relevant to our missing communities is his role in helping to mobilise churches to be more active in social action, from small projects like clearing up litter to much larger ones, some of which are described elsewhere in this report. His role tends to be that of providing expertise gained from working in the community, dealing with statutory agencies and through widely networking, in order to support churches. He is also interested in the ideas around social enterprise and believes faith communities have many of the ingredients to establish these in order to uplift the needy poor. He plays a part, often quite small, to help to identify projects, explore the implications and plan wisely and implement those plans effectively. His mantra is that he wants churches to work smartly (without having to compromise their core values as there is sometimes a tendency to do) and do so in partnership with other churches and non church organisations, if this is appropriate.

He is also a Street Pastor and goes out once a month, on a Friday or Saturday night (between 10pm and 3am), with a small team walking the streets around Southend High Street and the Sea Front. Street Pastors support people they meet on the streets in a “non preachy” way. While most of these are linked somehow to Southend’s vibrant night time economy, centred around pubs and clubs, they do not presume on the type of person they meet (they meet all sorts) and the help they are able to give (often if they do engage with people it is a short friendly exchange before moving on). Sometimes they provide directions, help those worse for drink, meet a practical need or become a calming presence when there are tensions on the street. Invariably, they meet a number of “rough sleepers”. Some are bogus, insofar it is a ruse to beg money from passers by, often to buy alcohol or drugs, who then go to a place to sleep after, although often these are squats or places where the living conditions would be deemed unacceptable. Because of the destructive lifestyle of many of these people, the type of help given is limited to a friendly exchange of words, cups of tea and the odd blanket. There are others, however, who are “genuine” and who may be on the street due to circumstances beyond their control. They often fall outside the criteria where Southend Borough Council will provide housing support and do not have the material and “inner” resources to help themselves. The frustration Street Pastors have is there is little more they can practically do other than provide advice such as places to go. Invariably the Emergency Night Shelter is full. Regarding the ethnic minorities that Street Pastors meet, it is likely the numbers are below the town’s average although, often when there are needs, many of these are similar to that of the ethnic majority.

### **Other Faith Communities**

During the course of the project we had opportunities to engage with other faith communities. Inter-faith dialogue has taken on particular importance because, while statutory organisations are often keen these days to have a faith perspective, they would often rather deal with the faith community as a whole than individual communities or particular faiths. While the attraction of having single point of contact is understandable, what is not always understood is that faiths differ considerably, often fundamentally, in what they believe and practise, thus making arriving at an agreed position

challenging. However, the author's impression has long been that the relationships between leaders of the main faith communities are generally very good and respectful, with much mutual tolerance and understanding being shown. Some Christians have expressed concern and solidarity when, as happened in recent days, synagogues and mosques were attacked. During the course of the project, the author did attend an inter-faith forum and did represent once the Faith Communities on the Stronger Communities board. Mention should be made of the "inter-faith project" that used to be based at the Reform Synagogue, which provided a resource for understanding other faiths.

Regarding other faiths, we found plenty of evidence of individuals being involved in the wider community, often taking significant roles. SCHP's Chair is a case in hand. He is a member of the Muslim community. Besides being our Chair, he is involved in a number of other organisations in the town, taking an active part. He has long seen the need to be proactive in working toward eliminating racial discrimination and promoting better community cohesion, not just involving his own community but all the ethnic minority communities. There are other examples of people exercising influence and "working toward a better Southend" and taking equally prominent roles. The same could also be said of the Jewish community. At least two of Southend's current councillors are from that community as well as leaders in business and commerce. A well-supported Council of Christian and Jews, often tackling serious issues, is another feature of Southend life.

Both the Jewish and Muslim communities do support good causes in the town and have in cases been their principal advocates. There are two synagogues: one Orthodox and one Reform, both in Westcliff, where there has traditionally been a larger Jewish population. While these operate fairly independently, relations between the two are cordial. A similar pattern emerges with the two mosques in the area (West Road and Chelmsford Avenue): serving different populations but subscribing to a common brotherhood. These all work to take care of the needs of their own members. The work of Jewish Care is an important example of an organisation that does this for members of the wider Jewish community. We understand there also to be social support provided from within the Muslim Community, which is not surprising given it is an important tenet of the religion. While the religious focus for many of our new ethnic minority communities is often Christian, for example Zimbabwe (Pentecostal), Poland, Kerala (India), Philippines (all Catholic), Greece (Orthodox), it should be born in mind that there continues to be new entrants among existing communities who are Muslim in faith, particularly Bengali and Pakistani, as well as from the newer communities - examples of those we met include from Poland, Turkey and Mauritius.

### **Looking ahead**

While we couldn't find many examples of non-Christian faiths initiating programmes for the benefit of the wider community, we recognise that our research may be incomplete. The recent work of the Share-IT project and current work of the Islamic Cultural Society and educational classes are examples of undertakings that do benefit the wider community, initiated by the Muslim community. The West Road mosque has in recent years hosted popular open days, displaying many aspects of Islamic culture and faith. The Interfaith project, hosted by the Reform Synagogue, is an example of a wider community undertaking by the Jewish community. Members of the Hindu community have frequently taken the lead in providing cultural presentations for the benefit of the wider community. One small but significant activity SCHP has been able to perform, as part of this project, is to be an honest broker and an independent source of advice for SBC, when for example they looked to put on a "faiths day" at the Civic Centre and wanted to know who to invite. In looking for funding to continue the work, SCHP have been successful in getting future funding from the Community Development Foundation. A grant from "Faiths in Action" for 2010/11 will enable SCHP to do further work with faith communities in order for it to continue to serve our missing communities, although the details of what is to be done need to be worked out as well as what is to be done by SCHP in the period up to April 2010. There seems little doubt though that the Faith Communities can play a major future part in serving our missing communities, but we shouldn't ignore that for some there is little or even an adverse interest in faith communities.

## **Chapter 11: Reviewing the ethnic minority organisations**

In many of the more well-established ethnic minority communities, not only do they often have strong links with one or more of the faith communities, often they formed their own associations, principally for cultural and social purposes and mutual support. Some of these are constituted and satisfy the necessary criteria in order to attract external funding and have often been successful.

During our discussions with SAVS, it became apparent that many ethnic minority communities, especially newer ones, were looking to form associations, with varying success, for example: one involving Somalis is now constituted and funded and is organising activities to benefit that community. A little prior to this project, the author was involved with the Bengali community, who had aspirations toward putting on a major community event. To our knowledge, while they have been successful in forming an association they have not been able to stage this event. Other communities are looking to form their own associations with varying success. Of particular interest is work in progress among two Zimbabwean groups and the success of the Malayalee community. While some from the various communities said their forming their own association will detract from becoming integrated into the wider community, there is an evident need for members of some of these communities to get together in order to address some of the common needs and concerns.

There also exist a number of organisations that seek to represent multiple BME communities. While we must not to generalise, often our missing communities are overlooked and the established BME communities ignore the needs and are sometimes negative toward associating with those from the newer BME communities. Our own organisation (SCHP), while not its main activity, provides indirect support, through putting on events and the activities of this project. The oldest association, championing the cause of ethnic minorities, is Essex Racial Equality Council (EREC), now 25 years old. Its particular emphasis has been challenging racial discrimination and doing so with some success. While EREC is well recognised in statutory circles as a key BME umbrella organisation, its role in advocating on behalf of the various BME communities is limited by its resources. The report *Turning Tides* commissioned, profiling communities in the three Central Southend wards, was carried out by EREC. Both at the beginning and end of the Missing Communities project, the author had constructive exchanges with EREC's community worker, and hope that now the project is over it may be able to help with addressing some of the issues that have been flagged.

A recently formed association for bringing together many if not all BME communities is the Southend Ethnic Minority Forum (SEMF). While a number of the major BME communities are now represented, it has not focussed on the newer ethnic minority communities and most of its members are from the longer established ethnic minority communities in the town. SEMF has been successful in becoming a fully fledged charity that is able to attract external funding and has put on a number of successful cultural events. It has also made inroads regarding domestic violence and health inequalities, as these issues affect the BME population more than is commonly realised, and has worked with statutory services in these areas. It recognises the need to promote equalities in education and hosts and supports initiatives in this area as well as partnering with SCHP. Another new charity promoting the interests of BME women is the Essex Asian Women's Association (EAWA) which was begun by a group of Asian women concerned to champion the interests of local BME women but whose remit has now extended more widely to other ethnic groups.

The most recent para-ethnic organisation is the BME Action group, hosted by SAVS. This has the particular remit of addressing the gaps indicated above and to engage with Southend Together in delivering on the aims of the Local Area Action plan as it relates to ethnic minorities but has as yet only been able to attract a few of the BME communities it wants to represent. To what extent any of the organisations detailed above will become involved in furthering the causes of our missing communities remain to be seen, and this will depend on future resources, vision of trustees etc.

## Chapter 12: Homelessness and housing

Early in 2008, Southend Borough Council was working on its Homelessness Prevention Strategy and was inviting the VCS to make contributions. Given his interest, the author saw an opportunity to help this vulnerable group and felt, along with others, that SBC were both part of the problem and part of the solution. A group was set up: Southend Homeless Action Network (SHAN), bringing together many in the churches along with various voluntary agencies with an interest in homelessness issues, to coordinate a response, engage with the Council, share best practice, provide mutual encouragement in an area that can be emotionally draining and to look for ways to address the gaps, for example among single homeless men, who often the Council (so it claims) do not have a statutory obligation to house, and tend only to signpost. The group has met several times and has successfully brought together many of the organisations with an interest in homelessness issues.

The situation of the homeless or those close to becoming homeless or in unsatisfactory housing (the clients), varies from families that have fallen on “hard times”, people coming out of the “care system” or prison or a failed relationship and those with substance misuse of mental health issues. While some clients are helped by the statutory services, there are many (met while researching this report) who are not and what help they do receive is limited and their main needs go unmet. This is a particular concern of SHAN. The problem is often accentuated by the chaotic lifestyle of many affected. While there is much to do, much work is being done to help the homeless (or in danger of becoming homeless), by SBC and many of the organisations in the VCS. One concern raised several times though was that systems in place to support people who need it are often inadequate.

Those living in poor housing include many from the newer BME communities, who do worse than the remaining Southend population in obtaining social housing regarding housing needs. They typically live in sub-standard private accommodation, perhaps houses converted for multi-occupancy. Often these people do not know their rights, lack the confidence to be assertive, do not have social support networks; are disempowered; have personal issues or they may either be not working and reliant on benefits and in cases on the charity of others or working long hours in low paid jobs. Many do not have the financial resources to pay the rent deposit that is usually needed to secure more suitable private accommodation (and because of their profile, social housing is often not an option, at least not in the short term). While SBC do operate a rent deposit scheme and work well with a number of private landlords, many of those we engage with, including from our newer ethnic minority communities, do not as yet benefit. Some inroads have been made while working with SBC housing support officers to improve the situation but there is some way still to go. There is a particular need to provide decent private rented accommodation for those who need it.

We frequently heard the name of one rogue landlord mentioned. Despite the SBC assertion they will bring to task private sector landlords who do not meet minimum standards there is evidence this often does not happen, even when this is reported by the tenants, although this usually does not happen because of fear of eviction and issues around disempowerment. Current legislation limits Council powers, although one wonders if creative ways to ensure acceptable private housing might be found. The main challenge is: how to break the cycle of hopelessness and despair that many are caught up in? A good relationship exists between SHAN and SBC and the hope is that this will develop and there will be further identification of the gaps in service provision and new, maybe innovative, ways to address these. There remain opportunities, particularly for the homeless charity, HARP, and the churches, to address the gaps, which include providing hostels and housing, support programs around themes such as “tough love” and learning life-skills, operating a rent deposit scheme to complement or extend that currently operated by SBC, and the provision of therapeutic interventions and opportunities for work and enterprise. Much is currently being done, including many examples of compassionate responses (for example: churches providing meals and food parcels and other help) yet, despite all what is happening, there are many unmet needs and while not all these can be met because of issues of adverse living patterns, some definitely can.

## Chapter 13: Racism

In presenting the report, it was realised that there are many areas and issues that have not been dealt with to the extent that might be considered desirable. The reasons why this is the case include: limited resources, the interests of the author (and the fact that the report is as much the culmination of a personal journey, which is continuing, as it is a piece of dispassionate research) and a concentration on areas where there seemed to be gaps in the research that has already been carried out. One recurring theme throughout the project which could have been explored further, but wasn't, is that of racism - is it real or apparent? Until quite late in the project it was not intended to deal with this issue, the main reason being because it was not deemed to be as important as many of the others that are dealt with. Yet it is, and while it is an issue that affects most of those who are of an ethnic minority origin, it is accentuated among the newer ethnic minority communities due to their unfamiliarity with the British way of life and its laws and a general lack of empowerment.

Often, speaking to those of non-white British ethnicity, the author asked if they had ever felt discriminated against because of their race? He also asked himself the question whether, despite anti-discrimination legislation, equal opportunities policies and a supposedly more aware and enlightened public, things these days are significantly better? Based upon a number of responses where he got the impression that many respondents felt they had not been discriminated against in a significant way and was tempted to conclude that racism is more a thing of the past and when people suggested otherwise consider they may be over-reacting. The fact that the Police have to investigate relatively few race hate incidents might also confirm this. He was also aware that being part of the white majority, he could never entirely put himself in the shoes of those who aren't.

However, he has received enough accounts of people who felt discriminated against on the grounds of race when applying for a job or in the work place, of untoward racially motivated incidents, and of people of BME origin not being listened to if they had a concern (some of which are detailed elsewhere in this report) that he has come round to the view that the picture is more complex than he had first thought, and that the problem varies between and within different groups - often depending how individuals fit in with and adjust to cultural norms. There are also indications that being visibly BME (i.e. non-white) may be a factor. The fact that those who are discriminated against often do not make complaints because they do not wish to appear "trouble makers" and these days that discrimination has become a lot more subtle because anti-discrimination legislation tends to clamp down on more overt forms, should not deter our discovering where the truth lies.

While some have no problem treating foreigners coming into the UK, including asylum seekers, as equals, there are those who don't and this is something that also needs to be taken into account. The rise of political movements like the BNP, the current economic crisis and the asylum seeker "debacle", all suggest the problems around racism might worsen. Organisations such as our (SCHP) own could help to counter this (although it recognises the need to maintain political neutrality). The author is proud that his 11 year old son makes no distinction based on ethnicity when dealing with people and choosing his friends - so perhaps our future hope lies with our children.

When the author did hear of accounts of supposed racism though, he sometimes questioned whether there were other issues involved e.g. a lack of cultural adaptability, but in any case there is scope to dig deeper and do so with sensitivity and an open mind. There is a need to balance the fight against racism and being aware of diversity issues with peoples' right of free expression, for example wanting to maintain the traditional culture against changes due to "political correctness" or doctrinaire multi-culturalism and for a desire for a more sensible and robust immigration policy. This project has recognised there is a range of views held, even among SCHP's own membership, and has tried to present the evidence without taking sides, but also being true to SCHP's own aims, such as respecting people of all races and having a greater understanding.

## Chapter 14: Immigration

Immigration is a complex issue and is one that is continually changing as are the rules governing how asylum seekers are dealt with. An asylum seeker is a person who leaves their country to move to another country, where they feel they will be protected, like the UK. In the UK, asylum seekers are officially people who have lodged a claim with the Government and are waiting to find out if they can stay in this country (some, and the number is not known, enter illegally and are thus not classed as asylum seekers). If they are allowed to stay, they become “refugees”. The situation is often misrepresented by the popular press and few understand the relevant issues. Some, of those who do, believe government policy to be flawed, arbitrary and cruel or merely adding patches to a well worn patchwork quilt. Popular solutions to end the problems have ranged from giving amnesty to asylum seekers to speeding up the assessment process and immediately deporting failed claimants. Either extreme, if implemented, has enormous ramifications.

### **Policies and practice**

Most who come to the UK each year do so to visit or work or study and then return to their own country. Others come with a right to settle, for example if coming from an EU country or having the “right” qualifications, especially in professions the UK wants to attract, or job to go to or they are the spouses or children of those already having a right to stay in the UK. There are yet others, the number of which nobody knows, but the number now in the UK could be approaching one million, who have come to seek asylum and waiting the outcome, usually seeking refuge from untoward conditions in their country of origin, ranging from fleeing outright persecution and oppression to coming for economic and social reasons. Of these, a significant number have had their applications for asylum turned down yet can or do not return to their original countries.

Asylum seekers come to the UK and then wait to find out whether their request for asylum is granted (this is often a lengthy process and can take years to resolve). Others have their request for asylum turned down and may be deported whence they came, except that often doesn’t happen right away as the mechanism is not in place and the problems existing in those countries remain or an appeal is pending. Others enter the country illegally or once their request for asylum is turned down choose to evade the system. There are different categories of asylum seekers and many qualify for minimum support: housing including utility bills (usually at houses designated by the authorities) and financial (or in kind, e.g. food vouchers).

There is a government policy to disburse asylum seekers to designated parts of the country, often in the North of England (Southend receives relatively few such placements these days). Sometimes people are moved on at short notice and there is plenty of evidence of the resultant distress. Depending on circumstances, that support could be withdrawn or reduced if the request for asylum is turned down. This means that asylum seekers often have to rely on charity or illegal means for support. Asylum seekers are usually not allowed to work (although there are some exceptions), and if they do there are stiff penalties for the asylum seeker and the employer. Asylum seekers come from all over the world and that profile is continually changing.

### **The Southend scene**

Southend has, in all likelihood, more than its fair share of asylum seekers, although we are unaware of any significant analysis having been done of the issues locally and the breakdown of communities affected or the number of failed asylum seekers, which is likely to be a significant proportion. Extrapolating from other data, a figure of 1000 asylum seekers, failed asylum seekers and those residing illegally could be, if anything, conservative, with the majority likely having come from Zimbabwe. While several countries are represented among Southend’s asylum seeker population, in line with the national profile, the figure deviates in one major aspect: the town has managed to attract a significant Zimbabwean population, the majority of whom (according to an

official spokesman) are included in the asylum seeker category. Even when asylum is granted, some of the issues affecting the people still remain (as detailed elsewhere).

### **Issues facing asylum seekers**

What has become clear, having spoken to a number during the course of this research, is that being an asylum seeker can be very stressful. Many feel disempowered and are unaware of what help is available, fearful of the future and frustrated at the restrictions imposed, especially not being able to work. There is a tendency to associate mainly with those from their own community. Poor English can add to problems. Regarding discrimination, we have received mixed messages, as with other elements of the BME community. Some have said they have felt this was not an issue. Some have complained of shoddy treatment by agencies meant to help, although there have been good reports as well. As already intimated elsewhere, given the number of cases where the law on racial discrimination is broken, if not the letter the spirit of the law, yet it too often goes unreported, there is a need to deal with this issue by the Police and other bodies (e.g. CDRP). Of all the people affected by this issue, who do not report these violations, it is the asylum seeker who fares worst because of his or her weak and vulnerable position in society.

Few asylum seekers know all their rights and as with other aspects of “missing communities” do not have access to the relevant information, for example some do not know they can access social and health services and schooling without any recrimination or wider disclosure, and are mistrustful of outsiders, especially those in an official capacity. Their limited means (often they do not have financial reserves) mean they are often dependent on charity, typically from extended family or friends or members of their own community. Some, and the exact number is unknown, enter the black economy or resort to illegal means in order to survive. There is evidence of resultant exploitation. During the course of our investigations, we have come across a small number of asylum seekers in all the various categories (mindful that we usually do not have all the relevant facts) and have been struck that while their situation is stressful, how often resourceful people are and wanting to make the most of life in the UK. Often faith communities play a supportive role.

### **What the situation was and now is**

A few years ago, there was a Asylum Seeker team based at Southend Borough Council, but that team reduced in size because of changing circumstances, and now come under the “Physical and Sensory Impairment section, focusing on community care needs. Many asylum seekers then were later allowed to stay in the UK when their country of origin, typically Poland, became (in 2004) members of the European Union. Also, the main task of housing asylum seekers was taken up by Central Government. When we spoke to members of the present team, we were told that they receive less than a handful of cases in a typical week. Much of the help that is provided is to do with explaining rights and resources and signposting, including to government agencies. They had in the recent past been involved in cross agency initiatives that engage the local community, with limited success. There appeared to be a willingness to pick up on this again.

The main government agency for handling asylum seekers is the UK Border Agency (UKBA, website [www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk)). We found when we spoke to an officer of the UKBA representing the enforcement branch, based at Stansted, that he was knowledgeable of many of the asylum seeker issues and he provided me with some useful information and leads. Another related agency dealing with asylum seeker needs, in particular claims for assistance, is the National Asylum Support Service (NASS, website [www.asylumsupport.info/nass](http://www.asylumsupport.info/nass)).

### **Available help**

The author’s impression, having spoken to asylum seekers and their advocates, is that most asylum seekers do not engage with SBC or UKBA or NASS unless they have to, and some have had negative experiences when they do engage with these services. Yet we found SBC are aware how they are perceived, who expressed the wish to engage with and support asylum seekers, including

partnering with other organisations and going into the community, in particular to support those with community care needs, although there is also an indication that asylum seekers with certain care needs, e.g. HIV/AIDS patients, do not always get the same help that is available to non-asylum seekers. The SBC help may extend to those whose claim for asylum has failed, for example by finding out and explaining their position and helping them access the Refugee Council. There is a great deal of knowledge within the Asylum Seeker team and we found there was a willingness to share this and to engage with the asylum seeker community, where they may be situated.

While asylum seekers have access to legal aid, regarding their legal needs, this is limited and many are unaware of their rights and of where they can turn to help. During our investigations, we met individuals from Zimbabwe, Morocco and Angola who help people who have asylum seeker issues but their resources are limited and so is the help that they can give. All of these expressed a desire to do more if more support were forthcoming. Having a centre and a regular meeting time was felt desirable. The Refugee Council (website: [www.refugeecouncil.org.uk](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk)) is a useful, impartial resource for helping asylum seekers, although they do not have a branch in Southend.

The main VCS agency in Southend to help asylum seekers is the Citizens Advice Bureau, who do better than many agencies serving our “missing communities”. The CAB gave the author insight into some of the many complex issues and clearly they have an important grip of the regulations and continual changes to the system and should be seen as a major resource. While CAB does well in engaging with the newer BME communities, there are many who do not get the help they need. The opportunity of going into these communities, involving the “movers and shakers” and leaders and the relevant professionals, is perhaps the best prospect of helping many more.

### **CART**

We should also mention Churches and Refugees Together (the last Chair agreed Asylum Seekers was the more correct term) (CART), which disbanded around the time the Asylum Seeker team at SBC cut back on their own numbers. CART was effective in providing practical support to asylum seekers and linking them to the appropriate statutory services. While the details of the needs and the profile of the client group have changed, the current needs of Southend’s asylum seekers may be as great as ever. While a new CART may not be appropriate, for example then there were many communities and languages, less cohesion within those communities, and a more locally focused (statutory) service, there is still a need to provide a service to our asylum seekers, probably run by good people in those communities, in their own settings, but supported by churches and statutory agencies, and funded. Whether or not this happens remains to be seen.

### **Facing the issues**

Finally, consideration should be given to the general issue of immigration, of which asylum seeking plays such an important part. For many in the public, the picture that is conjured up, often fuelled by the popular media, is not one of great need existing among the asylum seekers or the anomalies in the system designed to handle asylum seekers but rather of the draining of already over-stretched welfare resources, a dilution of the notion of “Britishness” and the failure of successive government policies to stem the flow of immigrants. It is not the intention of this report or within SCHP’s aims and objectives to pronounce on these matters, but there is a case for an intelligent debate, given that ignorance and prejudice can hinder people seeing widespread instances of individual distress and social injustice, for example those discovered while carrying out research for this report. Clearly, Southend faces many challenges around its migrant population that need to be addressed and, with the right approach, a sensible, compassionate, empowering response can be made. One of the contributors to this section of the report made the point: *“if your work progresses to creating a body of people to form a panacea in helping to promote regularisation of migrants and better relations toward both our community and media it would I believe prove a very worthwhile venture”*.

## **Chapter 15: Other issues affecting our missing communities**

Most of the issues identified while carrying out research into our missing communities are already touched on elsewhere e.g. racism. With certain issues, such as housing and homelessness, this has been discussed in sufficient depth such that it is not necessary to elaborate here. Some issues, such as domestic violence, are touched upon but require more investigation. Yet other issues have hardly been touched on, for example those around some of the other equality strands e.g. age (the elderly and children and young people), disability, gender, sexuality, yet are pertinent to this study. In this chapter, we have chosen to consider a selection of issues to a greater depth, because they have a particular and significant bearing on our missing communities and we have learnt things and gained insights that are worth passing on, yet recognise in all these there is still more investigation needed

The following are the issues that we have chosen to elaborate upon further:

- Advice and Information
- Learning English
- Children's Education
- Health
- Enterprise

### **Advice and Information**

In April, SCHP along with partners, in particular CAB and SEMF, put on an "Advice and Information" day at South East Essex College, ideal premises and location wise, situated in the centre of the town. To our knowledge an event of this nature had not been put on before and we were in no doubt that there were many people in Southend who might benefit by coming along. This event covered a range of issues e.g. health, benefits, domestic violence, debt and immigration and we were able to draw in experts in those fields to take part in the event. The event was not particularly aimed at our missing communities but it was recognised that they would likely benefit. While the event was well organised and publicised and was a useful trial run for similar future events, the turn out was disappointing. Besides being appreciated by those who did attend and delivering some of what we had planned, it brought home the experience of many involved in giving advice and information: the people who need it most are often those who do not receive it.

The saying: "knowledge is power" is nowhere more applicable than with our missing communities. There is much available in the town that could be beneficial yet those who might benefit do not take up what is on offer, even though there are some, including among our missing communities, who do benefit because they accept help that is on offer. If the Missing Communities project has achieved anything, it has made some inroads in making contact with the people who might benefit from the advice and information on offer by a plethora of organisations as well as build relationships with those organisations, and are thus able to build bridges between the giver and receiver of advice and information. It would be difficult to generalise as to what needs to happen now. Clearly, knowing our communities is a key factor and this project has contributed to doing that. Bringing advice and information to the communities affected, if need be with a translation facility, may be a way forward. We cite elsewhere those who are from our missing communities who do that because they know and have the trust of their community. However, often the desire to do something does not get translated into effective action. There does seem to be barriers e.g. fear, pride and mistrust to making things happen. Maybe the key to breaking the barriers is working with and supporting those who are best equipped to engage with those communities. What is clear, where there is social disadvantage, unless people are empowered through knowledge that disadvantage will remain.

### **Learning English**

For the author, one of the surprises of the project, was waking up to the realisation of how important it is to be able to communicate effectively in the English language, something he, like most, tended to take for granted, including having in the past subscribed to the view that people who come to the

UK ought to learn English. Whether or not this is relevant, the fact is that one of the reasons people do not get the help they need is due to the language barrier, even though services sometimes go out of their way to make information in their own language and provide translation services, although how extensively, it was difficult to tell. A more efficient way is for people to learn English, and while this is happening, it would seem it is not happening as extensively as it could be.

In our discussions with Southend Adult Community College (SACC), the main topic was how to go about delivering English language (and other learning) to our missing communities. Ideas included producing an information pack, possibly in some of the languages of those that we would target, and training up champions of those language groups to teach English to their own community in their own community settings. The task of how best to deploy the small team of community outreach workers in order to deliver English and other learning into the community remains a challenging one. The issue of funding is complex. Funding is available for certain activities e.g. for teaching English and other basic skills and to certain groups. What is clear is that many who would benefit from such learning do not take up what is on offer even when it is free. Excuses range from not being aware what is on offer, not liking the idea of learning English in a college setting or other cultural barriers, not seeing the need to learn and because of concentrating on earning a living. Even for those who speak English well, some have poor written skills, relevant for form filling, for example. Matching such people with the opportunity to learn English remains a challenge but the rewards in terms of community cohesion and individual empowerment could be considerable.

### **Children's Education**

Schools have an important part to play helping children of our missing communities settle into the wider community. The best time for them to enter the school system is when they start Nursery or Reception class. The lack of language skills is often less of a problem than and they quickly adapt and mix. Often mixing cultures can be a positive experience and one that some schools seem to capitalise on well. A resource provided by Blade Education is a DVD in many of the main languages spoken in the town. This presents many of the not always obvious aspects to consider when joining a new school. Families are given this with the view this will help their children adapt to their new school. We played a small part in linking the project to the Zimbabwean community. We did find evidence of children who come to the UK who enter schools at a later stage, especially secondary, who do have difficulty adapting because of cultural and language reasons and this causes a certain amount of distress. While allowance is made for this and assistance is given in the school system, it is not clear if enough is done. We spoke with the SBC Schools BME advisor who admits there are gaps but also points to a lot of good practice that SBC are trying to encourage.

There are 12 secondary schools in Southend, all with various specialities and types of governance (average size 1000, from 600 to 1600 pupils): four are grammar (two boys, two girls, all with around 1000 pupils), three deemed by Ofsted as "outstanding". Of the non-grammar schools, two are faith (Catholic) based (one boys, one girls), the remainder are mixed-sex; two have recently been in "special measures" (but now out of them). Four of the non-grammar schools have grammar streams, including the two faith schools. Entrance to the grammar schools is by passing the 11+, administered by a local consortium. Competition for places is stiff, with grammar schools massively oversubscribed, including from outside the town. There are 37 primary schools in the town and there are considerable differences, for example in 11+ and SATs achievements. There is an "Extended School" program operating in some of these schools (e.g. the author's own local school: Temple Sutton) and this provides programmes that are designed to appeal to the local community, including from the BME community, for example Children's Centres and family learning.

Members from our missing communities are likely to be found in all of these schools although it is also likely they tend to go the less popular and lower attaining schools. It was interesting to note in one of the articles in the local newspaper (Echo 04/05/09), a recent Ofsted inspection of Futures College, which has many Polish and Czech children, scored satisfactory but were commended in the support it gave to children in learning English. Some of the primary schools in the Central Southend

have a significantly high number of BME children, and where the main languages spoken by the children are not English. Many families have limited understanding of the school system, for example many do not know about the 11+ until they have to apply for a secondary school place for their child and therefore are at a disadvantage because the children then compete against those of more “clued up” families, who start their 11+ preparation much earlier. We spoke to a Zimbabwean teacher who felt the main reason his otherwise able son failed his 11+ was due to ignorance of the “system” and to a Bulgarian accountant who our felt timely advice helped her son to pass the 11+.

We found though that some sections of the BME community, especially those who are more established, are very aware of school system in operation and go out of their way in preparing their children for the 11+ and get their children into what they consider the better schools. This is particularly the case among the Muslim community, who cite concerns over standards, discipline, manners and mixed sex education as among the reasons. The author’s own son, who sat the 11+ exam, joined and enjoyed the 11+ class run at the local mosque. Even among other sections of our missing communities, these concerns were raised and it became apparent speaking to a number that they valued education and wanted their children to do well. It became clear that many from our missing communities rated the two faith schools particularly highly and were frustrated (including cases among Polish Catholics) when their children failed to gain places to go there. Finally, and in order to help redress any imbalance, it appears that children from BME communities as a whole, who attended Southend schools, do better in their GCSE results than the national average.

### **Health**

At the start of the project, it was felt that health was not an issue the project could do much about and the responsibility for doing so lay squarely with South East Essex Primary Care NHS Trust (PCT), which commissions services to deliver health care. The issues of health inequalities among ethnic minorities are huge and are well documented (a Google search will reveal some interesting data) and has attracted much recent attention, but outside the scope of this report. However, despite these issues being flagged and acknowledged, it is unclear if these are being addressed adequately. The increase in Southend’s BME population warrants more attention being given. While the Strategic Plan for NHS South Essex comes up with many worthy health aims, there does not appear much focus on BME issues, and data collection profiling BME issues is poor. The pattern emerging is that members of BME communities, especially the newer ones, do less well out of available health services than those of non-BME communities. For example, given the long hours worked by some and ignorance of available services, they may feel less inclined to engage with those services. One recently reported example was of a Polish male in his forties, who turned up at the Hospital as an emergency patient, with advanced cancer, but had never even been registered with a GP.

Given a tendency toward holistic approaches to health these days, i.e. addressing quality of life issues rather than focusing on curing diseases, the need to address this lack of engagement and the issues that give rise to poor health e.g. stress, poor housing, lack of employment opportunities is an important one. In discussing with the PCT, it was felt there was a willingness to engage with any VCS organisation, including paying them to provide services to meet agreed aims, which would seek to address health inequalities (although one person, whose organisation came with a proposal, told the author his bid was turned down for no good reason). Of particular concern is the apparent lack of data on health issues concerning missing communities (GP surgeries, who could get this data, often don’t do this as it is not part of their contract). The fixation on focusing on the deprived (IMD) wards means some needy areas get missed out. When the project started, the PCT had a director with particular responsibility for BME issues and a BME community worker. They are no longer functioning in these posts and appear not to have been replaced. There was also a diversity committee that the author attended and that is no longer to be functioning despite identifying issues.

The following are projects and people we have spent time with during the course of our research:

- Southend Mind’s Reason project is a bright spot in addressing some of the BME issues, especially where the needs are greatest, with a particular focus on mental health needs.

- The “Links” project for data gathering around health issues in each of the Wards is a hopeful development for improving our understanding of health needs.
- The emphasis given by Southend Hospital in addressing issues that concern our missing communities, in appointing a Diversity manager, considering the needs of BME staff and patients and improving policies and processes, is a further helpful development.
- The Vineyard, Storehouse project (focusing on homelessness) and the Trust Links, Growing Together project (focusing on mental health and therapeutic gardening), while not especially focusing on BME needs do provide a health service that benefit our missing communities.

### **Enterprise**

In considering the various social concerns around our missing communities, it is easy to lose sight of the employment needs, although these have been referred to elsewhere in the report. While there is some evidence of a welfare dependency culture, this seems less than with the already established community, partly because the benefits are less. Several of the BME people we spoke to made it clear they wanted to work and were willing to take lower paid jobs to do so. The need to create more employment and expand the local economy is in everyone’s interest. While it might be stating the obvious, having decent jobs could be a powerful corrective to some of the social problems. The Turning Tides report on Community Enterprise pertaining to the Milton, Victoria and Kursaal Wards, in its identification of centres within the community, projects and initiatives that may have a part to play in helping future employment prospects, for example by having various centres for community based business advice and enterprise, is an interesting one with much potential. As we have already established, all these wards have a significant size new BME community; all of which could benefit. The existence of newly started up businesses, especially in the areas with the bigger BME populations, for example in retail and food, is evidence that this is already happening. While it is impossible to generalise, and there is the “asylum seeker not being allowed to work” issue (discussed elsewhere), many of our newer ethnic minority workers are working (higher portion than average and possibly linked to the fact they do less well out of the welfare benefit system) yet often working in employment e.g. retail trade, care homes or restaurants, with lesser prospects, even when they have qualifications and experience to do a higher grade of work. While there is work discrimination and also evidence of exploitation, it is not clear how widespread this is or the reasons why qualified people don’t get the jobs they are qualified to do. More investigations would be needed to find the reasons. Cultural adaptation and the need for some retraining also appear to be significant issues. There is evidence that these groups are more adaptable and flexible in their approach to work, and could be well placed to deal with the current economic downturn as a result.

During the course of the project, the author attended a number of sessions of the recently set up Southend Social Enterprise Network (SSUN). The ideas behind social enterprise encompasses all the principles of running a sound business but adapting the notions of carrying out an enterprise to benefit the community or individuals who for one reason or another may not otherwise enter into mainstream employment, or to support an existing charity. He found the information provided and the networking, including with some referred to in this report, to be especially helpful. The possibilities of setting up social enterprises that benefit our missing communities are considerable and consistent with the recommendations is the Turning Tides report. The recent appointment of business advisors to carry out some of the report’s recommendations is a positive step. A cautionary note should be given though: social enterprises are a good idea in principle but the principle is not always accepted by those who buy in services, in particular councils and health service commissioners, partly for understandable reasons such as being assured of value for money, with the enterprise needing to be seen to be stable and run on sound business principles, but also there appears to be no agreed monetary measure for social return. Whilst the principle of running a business whose aim is to benefit a community, e.g. employing people who might not otherwise be employed rather than paying out in welfare benefits and doing something that has a monetary equivalent value in terms of regenerating a deprived area is a compelling one, there is a long way to go in Southend in establishing such businesses, but at least a start has been made.

## **Chapter 16: Reviewing intended project outcomes**

One of the conditions for being given the funding for this project was that we had to deliver a number of outcomes e.g. number of people helped. The production of this report is one such outcome. There are, however, three specific outcomes that we will now look at.

### **The Big Summer Event**

The Big Summer Event SCHP puts on every year goes ahead independently of this project. However, because this project did take place, it enhanced the 2008 event and will add to the 2009 event. Firstly, it enabled SCHP to spend more time with many its partners and thus develop those relationships. Secondly, it enabled SCHP to reach new organisations, which took part in the 2008 event and are expected to take part in 2009. This included new communities, for example the “Roma” and Malayalee (making cultural contributions), new organisations and other departments within organisations already partnering with us, for example: Southend Borough Council.

### **Taste of Poland**

In the second half of 2008, we met with Southend Library to discuss ways we could work together to assist our missing communities. It became even more apparent when we met how much the library does offer besides a book lending service, something often not realised, and this is particularly relevant to our missing communities. Indeed, the library plays a pivotal role in disseminating information to all who would avail themselves of the opportunities, which is the key to empowerment. In our discussions we decided that a good idea to promote our respective aims was to put on an event. We considered who to aim the event toward, where to hold the event and when, what the event comprises and who to partner with. It emerged that the Polish community, by virtue of being the biggest community in Southend and one with which we already had good links, would be the ideal target audience along with any outside the Polish community with an interest (Southend being twinned with Sopot in Poland was also a factor). We decided that the library would be a suitable venue as the services it presents could be shown off, the space and facilities would be appropriate to our needs and it was a central location, near to where many Poles in Southend lived.

We decided to hold the event on March 21 2009. Having taken advice from Southend Borough Council, who were looking later on to run a Polish event, we decided to limit the music content, although we did sign up a Polish Roma singing and dance troupe and also the children from the Polish Saturday School to sing and dance. An opportunity to learn about the library services was provided and also Polish language, history, arts and crafts, folklore and story telling. We also laid on a free light buffet. Because of the way we could arrange the budget, the Missing Communities project paid both for the food and the publicity. The Library bore the brunt in the organisational effort. The event involved a number of departments in the Library. Various Polish organisations and outlets were contacted. Turning Tides, who work among Poles, also got involved. Publicity and information was dual language. The event was attended by the Southend Mayor and her deputy.

In the end, some 600 persons attended on the day, which was widely considered to be a great success, as indicated in the feedback that was received. Being on the reception desk, the author was able to engage with several of the visitors and thus fulfil one of the projects main aims, which was to try to understand individual perspectives. The fact people had a good day and did learn about library services was itself a good result. English visitors, sometimes having family members who were married to Poles, appreciated the opportunity to find out more about Polish culture. A great deal of networking went on. Making the Polish Saturday School and Roma (gypsy) band centres of attention helped to empower those groups. It is hoped that SCHP and Southend Library can build on this experience and run future such events for other of our “missing communities”.

## **SOS**

This is the name given to a men's group that now meets regularly, once a week. One of the outcomes set at the start of the project was to deliver learning to at least one hard-to-reach group. A number of discussions took place with our main learning partner, Southend Adult Community College (SACC), as to how this would be achieved, including spending the money that had been set aside for this purpose. SACC are very keen to deliver English and other learning to the newer ethnic minority communities, where a clear need has been identified, and while the funding situation is complex, a number of the people we want to target do qualify. The recurrent problem is that people do not always take up what is on offer, and for that reason SACC is committed through its community outreach team to deliver learning in the community.

In the end, the opportunity to deliver learning came from an unexpected quarter. Reason is a project of Southend Mind. This is an outreach project to support members of ethnic minority communities with mental health needs. The Reason community outreach workers have managed to engage with a variety of groups in Southend and surrounding districts and are able to provide limited support. It has also been successful engaging with individuals (mainly single men) who are part of a loose network, who know one another and who typically meet informally around places like Warrior Square. The core constituency of the group are North African Muslim men although they are not active in the local mosques, not feeling particularly welcome. There are others associated with this group who are from other countries, typically from Southern Europe. There are a number of common themes affecting the group: many are homeless or live in bad housing (often all they can get). Many have one or more of a: mental health problem, problem with alcohol or problem with drugs. Many have low self esteem and low motivation levels. Many live chaotic lifestyles. Many distrust the police. Many do not engage with many of the available services that might help.

After speaking with members of this group, Reason and SACC, it was decided to set up group (SOS). The idea was to meet regularly, where a safe, friendly and welcoming environment is provided, where drinks and biscuits are laid on, learning can be delivered and issues addressed (confidentially if needed). Ideally, we wanted the group to be self-sustaining and autonomous, although that will likely take time. Settling on a place to meet took time. St. John's Church and the Storehouse facility in Coleman Street were looked at but were deemed unsuitable. In the end the Balmoral Community Centre was chosen. (This surprising and useful resource is one of the centres rescued and run by the local community, which has been remarkably successful.) One of SOS's members is key to getting people he knows to come along. The Missing Communities project was able to contribute to the hire of the room and running costs as well as the author getting involved.

The group began meeting in March so it is still early days. Numbers range from 4 to 10 and the same people do not turn up each week. A number of successful outcomes have already been achieved: a number of forms have been filled in, learning has been engaged in, people have freely shared issues in a positive way, there has been inroads in engaging with relevant professionals, e.g. social workers and housing officers and a memorial service was arranged for a friend who died. We are hopeful there will be improvement in the dire housing situation of some members. The author was particular pleased that one of the SOS members who wanted to find alternative accommodation has done so with the help of an SBC outreach officer, who he met during his work with SHAN.

Given the complexity of issues affecting group members, we do not expect radical changes right away (the issue of motivation still remains) but slowly changes are being made and, as one member put it, instead of living destructive lives, people will start to live constructive lives. While the group does need support, it is hoped it will eventually become completely autonomous, including becoming a constituted organisation which is able to attract funding. One of the future meetings will be with the SAVS funding officer, to explore setting up as a charity. While far from perfect, this group could well provide a model for similar undertakings with other "missing communities".

## Chapter 17: Looking beyond Southend

The Missing Communities project decided to focus on the Borough of Southend-on-Sea for its activities and research. This was not a difficult decision to make because SCHP's aim is specifically to serve the residents of Southend. Moreover, our principle partner, Southend Borough Council, is a unitary authority with jurisdiction for the Borough alone, even though other agencies have a wider remit, typically: Essex, South Essex or South East Essex. One of the remarkable aspects of the Project was that so much was done with so little in terms of resources (£10,000). What took place in the project could be commended to others, wanting to do something similar elsewhere, as a model.

While it suited the resources and remit of the project to concentrate on Southend, there are reasons why it might have been helpful to take on a wider area - regional or even national:

1. We could draw on useful national data and statistics that are generally available and be able to extrapolate information pertaining to Southend. As it happened, what we did do that to an extent, making adjustments only in order to take into account possible local variations.
2. Looking ahead, regarding funding possibilities, some funding is only available to those who can deliver services at a national level. SCHP's position as a small local charity means that is not possible to draw such funding unless it is able to feed into a national network.
3. It would be helpful to contrast the situation in Southend with that found elsewhere.
4. It might be possible to identify good practice elsewhere that could apply for Southend - conversely good practice in Southend could be made available to be applied elsewhere.
5. It might be a vehicle to influence national policy, just as this report might do so locally.
6. There are national resources and organisations or those found in other places that we could have availed ourselves of and linked up with when supporting our missing communities.
7. Looking at the picture nationally, the thought of a Missing Communities project, reasonable given the general needs, in every large town or city in the UK, would seem to be a grossly inefficient way to deploy stretched resources. A better way might be to pool resources and thus widen the coverage, while at the same time take into account local variations.
8. One of the strange paradigms in which communities currently function is that national policies, including how funding is allocated, have a major impact, including how local government and services operate, despite certain moves toward greater local autonomy.

While it is likely that in many cases the Southend profile (communities and issues) will not differ markedly from the national picture, there will no doubt be interesting contrasts, for example:

1. When we contacted the UK Border Agencies to enquire regarding immigration statistics we found that the national profile seemed to be markedly different from that of Southend.
2. Talking to an African community leader, the unusually high local Zimbabwean population in Southend might partly be explained by the measurable fact that those from different African countries tend to settle in different areas according to nation (or tribe) of origin, often attracted by a kernel of a community that is already in existence in the various places.
3. Talking to specialists responsible for dealing with the different issues, for example housing, there are variations in the way these issues are handled in different areas. In some of our work with SHAN, we found linking with the homeless charity, Shelter, helpful, for example identifying best practice, when engaging with SBC in the way it dealt with those issues.

While Southend has its own unique set of issues and local factors applicable only to Southend and, understandably, there will be calls for local solutions to meet local needs, there is also the bigger picture that should not be ignored. A way forward to smartly serve Southend's missing communities might be becoming part of a national network and do so in partnership with other members of the VCS and, indeed, with the statutory services, although this is not something that can be developed with current resources, although a start has been made. What is clear, however, is that we live in the real world and do what we can with what we have in order to make a difference.

## Chapter 18: Conclusions

Now we have come to the end of the project it is possible to reflect on whether or not it has achieved what was intended, mark successes and good practice as well as any failure or things that could have been done better and, importantly to reflect on the report of our findings, which have been extensive and cover many areas. Presenting those findings was a challenge as there was no obvious way to do this without entirely avoiding duplicating information being presented, simply because information is often relevant and is contained in more than one context, and sometimes we need to refer elsewhere. Specifically, the project has engaged with many statutory and non-statutory agencies, met with different communities and spoken with individuals within those communities to find out their perspectives. Also, it has identified many of the issues affecting and concerning those communities, uncovered important factual information and linked this to what we know already and, more importantly, has been instrumental in making beneficial things happen.

When we considered the task before us at the beginning, one of the main ideas was to quantify what we know already about our missing communities, research the gaps in our knowledge and provide a coherent depiction of the picture to emerge. It became apparent early on that not only did the project lack the resources for such an ambitious undertaking, but some of the work was already being done by others, often in uncoordinated ways, which wasn't realised at the time. The smart way forward was to bring together the work already being done and work within the existing structures and with those doing the work, steering them toward finding out what we needed to know, and this was done with a degree of success. Much of our early effort was to establish what was already known and associate with those who might help us meet our aims, from professionals working in the voluntary and statutory sectors to those we were trying to help, who may be found in humble circumstances and who had something worthwhile to contribute. Always we were aware that the best approach remains one of openness, humility, winsomeness, discretion and singleness of purpose.

Given there remain needs in every area of life: employment, education, culture, housing, health, general empowerment, etc., this begs the question: how are these going to be met and who are best equipped to meet those needs? Having such an open-ended remit meant it was hard to resist the temptation to explore every nook and cranny, although that would have been impossible anyway. Always the aim was to research the facts and then facilitate the action. The latter is important since research was never the main goal but rather a means to an end, i.e. helping people who need it most. While we do not purport to address many of the issues other than in a rudimentary manner, we do hope to encourage those who want to build on the foundations laid, without being prescriptive as to the type of building. Regarding the future, the way for SCHP to develop further the work of this project is a matter for the trustees and membership to decide. Irrespective, the evidence of needs (as this report tries to demonstrate) is overwhelming and there is a considerable amount of useful work still to be done to address these, and yet with the right approach this can be achieved.

Finally, while it is impossible to generalise, there is often a lack in capacity, needed to get things done in the voluntary and community sector (VCS), especially by groups that significantly involve or serve our missing communities. Often members of the VCS do what they do because it needs doing, without accommodating the "bigger picture". There is a need to strengthen the VCS in order to maximise the potential that may otherwise not be realised. The picture of over-worked, under-resourced workers, with an uncertain funding future, is often true. The VCS needs to be taken seriously, and understood and assisted by the statutory organisations (despite recent improvements). The VCS would do well to expand and look to deliver better services, including making the most of the funding opportunities, not just from charitable giving but also be paid to deliver such services. It is hoped that this report will contribute to the paradigm, increasingly being encouraged in all sorts of circles, especially when allocating money is concerned, where statutory and non-statutory agencies work together in partnership to help benefit our missing communities and for everyone involved to go from the path of least resistance: i.e. "ticking boxes" to that of addressing real needs.

## Chapter 19: Recommendations

One of the problems of undertaking a piece of work such as an investigation into Southend's missing communities, even accounting for de-scoping so that only the newer ethnic minority communities are included, is that the work can be so open-ended and on-going. What is now being presented in this "final report" remains as "work in progress" and is offered as such. There is still a lot more work that could have been done and could yet still be done.

### Recommendations for further investigation

We have majored on certain communities and even among these there is considerable scope for further investigation. While we have chosen the two biggest new ethnic minority communities: Polish and Zimbabwean, there are many others who are new to Southend that have been dealt with only superficially or not at all even. Some of the issues, e.g. around immigration and housing, could be further investigated. There are clearly gaps in the information that has been gathered that need to be filled in order to give the full picture. In the report being presented, a number of areas have been identified that could usefully be further investigated, including:

- Issues around racial discrimination (these were only touched on during this project)
- Issues around the Criminal Justice System and Probation
- Issues around mental health and around drugs and alcohol and other forms of addiction
- Issues around exploitation e.g. in the workplace, regarding housing, domestic violence
- The needs of other smaller new communities e.g. Portuguese, Philippine, Czech
- The perspective of young people and children (hardly touched on during this project)
- The perspective of older people (less of an issue right now because of the younger age profile of many of the newer ethnic minority communities but will become one)
- Issues around sexuality and the experience of gays and lesbians in these communities
- Issues around disability and the experience of the disabled in these communities

Regarding work that can practically be carried out in the future, the author suggests the following:

1. Help further to fill gaps in information and support, and help statutory partners, who often have the resources to do so, to collect and make available the information that is still needed.
2. Gain further understanding of the national picture and link in with national networks.
3. Build on relations already established with SCHP's statutory and VCS partners as well as with the missing communities themselves and continue to facilitate closer networking.
4. Practically address issues around health inequalities among our missing communities, not yet dealt with, and work with the NHS providers and other partners in order to do so.
5. Establish relations with communities we have not been able to help, yet still need support.
6. Assist the individual communities in forming associations or other suitable mechanisms that would address some of the issues arising out of this report and link with SAVS.
7. Continue to work with Southend Adult Community College and/or other organisations in order to provide English language learning opportunities to those who need it.
8. Continue to work with Southend Library in order to put on further events, like the "Taste of Poland" day, but aimed at other new ethnic minority communities e.g. Zimbabwean.
9. Continue to support the SOS project and anything similar in nature that might arise.
10. Continue to be represented on the various committees hosted by statutory and other voluntary organisations and help work toward "creating a better Southend".
11. Continue to make available expertise to those delivering services that would both benefit our missing communities and support partners who are setting up such services.
12. Continue to work with the faith communities in their support of our missing communities.

### Specific actionable recommendations

The following constitute a list of specific actionable recommendations that the author has highlighted as a direct result of his research and the conclusions drawn from it:

1. With respect to the issues identified relating to our missing communities, these need to be considered by the relevant agencies and incorporated into their strategies and plans.
2. While there is a lot of relevant data in the public domain relating to our missing communities, this needs to be further brought together and gaps in data need to be filled.
3. Quantify the needs relating to the issues of asylum seekers and those living in poor housing.
4. Regarding health inequalities among our missing communities that have yet to be addressed, in particular in accessing services, creative ways need to do so found to do this.
5. The taboo subject of mental health is as relevant, and maybe more so, among our missing communities as the existing BME communities, and yet for all there are needs to be met.
6. The issue of domestic violence is a significant one, and needs further exploration.
7. The issue of racial discrimination remains a significant one, and needs further exploration.
8. There are many who are making significant contributions to improving the lives of those in our missing communities, often beyond the call of duty, and they need to be recognised.
9. Southend Borough Council is making important inroads into partnering with those in the voluntary sector and other agencies and that relationship needs to be further developed, including joint provision of new services that would benefit our missing communities.
10. While Southend Borough Council fulfil most of their statutory obligations, there are things that could and should be done beyond that, in partnership with others, in areas such as housing and asylum seeking, thus making “Southend a better place” (SBC strap line).
11. While the Voluntary Sector does a considerable amount toward helping our missing communities, the lack of capacity and failure to make the most of opportunities, in particular by partnering with other voluntary and statutory agencies, needs to be addressed.
12. Statutory Sector partners sometimes need to be educated in order to have a more realistic understanding of the limitations of the voluntary sector and to respect its primary function is to champion the cause of those it serves rather than fall in line with other agendas.
13. There is further scope to develop and fund at grass root level VCS led initiatives, possibly as social enterprises, that might meet the needs of our missing communities.
14. More effort is needed to bring all the interested parties into partnerships that seek to meet the needs of missing communities, specifically to remove barriers and overcome obstacles.
15. The faith communities need to be encouraged in the important part they potentially and actually play in meeting the needs of our missing communities.
16. Given that an inadequate grasp of the English language is widespread, there is a need to develop the provision and uptake of English learning among our missing communities.
17. Empowering key people in our missing communities represent the best hope of being able to address the issues and they need to be given every encouragement to do so.
18. The issue of how best to provide support to the communities themselves, e.g. setting up associations, financial, use of buildings and other resources, needs further consideration.
19. There remains a need to form strong BME associations, and although the doing of which is a challenge, those who have the expertise should be encouraged to provide support.
20. Regarding three of the main project outcomes: Big Event, Polish Day and SOS, these have all been shown as meeting needs and ought to be developed further in future.
21. In terms of community engagement and regeneration, models such as that which has been described, relating to what is happening in the St. Lukes Ward, need to be considered.
22. In terms of furthering the causes of the new ethnic minority communities, there is a need to deal with the gaps and overlaps in the existing structures and organisations.
23. There is scope for further work in disseminating information to professionals regarding our missing communities (it is hoped this report will contribute to making this happen).
24. There is scope for further developing community based business initiatives that involve our missing communities, possibly using the newly appointed community business advisors.
25. Southend Together does need more grass root participation (with “clout”) so that it can more effectively provide a strategic lead in what services are delivered in Southend and how.

## **Appendix A: History of Community-in-Harmony**

**The following is based on the account published on the SCHP website:**

Toward the end of 2002, representatives from Essex Police met with members of the Trust Links Growing Together project, working in the field of mental health and therapeutic gardening, to discuss issues such as the regeneration of the local community, the prevention of race hate crime and the desire to create an environment whereby every one would feel valued and have a fair and equitable quality of life. This led to the creation of Southend Community-in-Harmony Partnership (SCHP). It was agreed that an excellent way of working to achieve our aims would be to organise an open air event where diverse community groups could come together and have fun celebrating everything that is valued and worthwhile within the community of Southend. It was first hoped to hold such an event in September 2003 with a few interested groups, but it was considered prudent to postpone it until 2004, when contact could be made with more organisations whose members might wish to participate.

The inaugural event therefore took place on Sunday 27th June 2004 with the aim of celebrating together the diversity, heritage and culture of the community groups of Southend-on-Sea through music, dance, arts, crafts, visual displays, food, customs, children's games and other similar activities. It was held at Gainsborough Park and the organisations that participated were: DIAL, Essex Fire & Rescue Service, Essex Police, Growing Together, Milton Community Partnership, PPI Forum, Praise in the Park, Residents Association of Westborough, SAVS, South East Essex Chinese Association, South East Essex College, South East Essex Multi-Cultural Association, South Essex Partnership NHS Trust, Southend Adult Community College, Southend Borough Council, Southend CAB, Southend Credit Union, Southend District Pensioners Campaign, Southend Drug Action Team, Southend Ethnic Minority Forum, Southend High School for Boys, Southend Hindu Association, Southend Islamic Trust, Southend PCT, Southend Sikh Society, Southend United Football Club, Southend Youth and Connexions Service, Trust Links, Westborough School, Youth Offending Service, Young Peoples' Substance Misuse Service and a number of other smaller groups.

The funding for this event needed to be secured beforehand and so applications were made to local and regional grant making bodies and so in this connection, thanks should go to Essex Police, Southend Borough Council, Southend United Football Club and ROSCA Trust for their generous donations and support that made holding this event possible. The then Mayor of Southend, Councillor Roger Weaver officiated at the grand opening at Gainsborough Park and he visited Trust Links' project, Growing Together next door and opened the community and wild life gardens there. Essex Police helped in overseeing the security and traffic arrangements on the day and were able to estimate that about a thousand people in total attended both events.

Following on from this success, the second event was held the following year, at Gainsborough Park on Sunday 19th June 2005 and opened by the then Mayor of Southend, Councillor Chris Dandridge. This too proved a great success and according again to Essex Police estimates, it was attended by around 2000 people. It was supported by ASDA Shoebury Store, ROSCA Trust, Southend Borough Council, the Young Persons' Substance Misuse Service and the Youth Offending Team for supporting us, both financially and in kind, not forgetting the Southend Drugs Action Team who seconded an employee on a part time basis to co-ordinate these first two events in 2004 and 2005 at no cost to SCHP, and we thank them all.

The 2006 Event had a change of venue and was held at the Eastwoodbury Centre in Eastwoodbury Lane. This allowed us to save precious resources by utilising the infrastructure already in place there – a large sports field, a grandstand and the permanent clubhouse facilities and utilities. The event was opened by the Mayor of Southend Cllr Ron Price. We also welcomed Sir Teddy Taylor

and a number of local dignitaries who joined upwards of 2000 people in enjoying the day – held again in scorching weather – the ice cream van once more doing a roaring trade. We had the usual representation of stalls with ethnic food and culture, displays, bouncy castles, Chinese lions, balloon, clowns – and a miniature racing track activity, as well as entertainment provided by TAGS and a rock gospel group. We also greatly valued the support of our main sponsors, Southend Council, the Southend Fund, the Key Fund, the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund and ROSCA, as well as the financial support from public services and individual people and businesses in the town.

After the 2006 Annual General Meeting, we at SCHP asked ourselves some searching questions with regard to our future direction - as to whether we should carry on as before, organising a large open air event as in previous years or as to whether we should change direction somewhat. Overwhelmingly, the view of our members and supporters was that our aims and objectives were best served by organising a large high profile event every summer, expressing to the local people how we can all, whatever our background, have a fun day together. Perhaps the main message emanating from our events is how important it is to achieve unity, tolerance, understanding, friendship and harmony among the different cultures, nationalities, races and religions in our town. Above all, we hope that we can - and wish to - be kind and compassionate to each other and enjoy being part of this multicultural society which enriches all our lives. We did indeed put on an event in 2007, held this time at Southend High School for Boys. The weather on the day was appalling but while our activities were curtailed and we had to operate mainly inside the school we continued to attract new groups and attractions including holding a football tournament for youth, mainly from estates in the town.

**Following on from the website description:**

We decided to use the same venue for our 2008 event, which proved most successful and was the biggest both in terms of numbers attending (over 2500) and organisations taking part (over 100). Feedback received was generally very positive and complimentary. As a partnership, while our main focus has been putting on our big annual event, we are committed first and foremost in fulfilling our afore-mentioned aims. We have received much encouraging feedback that we have begun to achieve those aims and we hope to do so to a greater extent in the future, reaching out to new groups such as the newer ethnic minority communities and those who are socially disadvantaged. In this regard, in February 2008 we received £10000 from “Awards for All” to find out more about and establish better links with the groups we are currently not touching and where the needs appear to be the greatest and begin to help meet some of those needs.

SCHP continues to hold its monthly meetings, often featuring guests involved with serving our community in one way or another but with an agenda to plan and report on activities. It is recognized that SCHP needs to widen its membership and that is happening. It now has its leaflet that is widely circulated and an up to date website: [www.southend-community-in-harmony.org.uk](http://www.southend-community-in-harmony.org.uk). The Missing Communities project has been and gone, although there remain possibilities of continuation work (currently being discussed) as well as an opportunity to do a continuation project in 2010/11. As an example of new ways of trying to meet its aims, SCHP, along with SEMF and Southend Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), was able to put on and Advice and Support day. SCHP is currently in an advanced stage of planning its next Big Event, scheduled to take place yet again at Southend High School for Boys, on Sunday 21 June 2009, and it is aimed this will be the best ever. It is hoped that the efforts of the Missing Communities project will bring in new participation.

## **Appendix B: Facts about Community-in-Harmony**

### **Significant facts about the Southend Community-in-Harmony Partnership (SCHP) include:**

1. SCHP began in 2003, and became a registered charity (No. 1123266) in 2008. It is properly constituted, has its own board of trustees, submits annual accounts that are scrutinised, has several policies governing its activities, is open to a wide membership who decides what goes on and seeks to be exemplary in promoting good practice within the voluntary sector.
2. Other than paying coordination fees for the organising of its events and projects, the work of SCHP is entirely undertaken by volunteers.
3. Because of its commitment to put on free events and freely serve the local community, it is reliant on the generosity of its supporters and that of grant giving bodies.
4. SCHP welcome both individuals and groups to join them - membership is free. Members are entitled to take part and vote at meetings - which are generally held monthly. SCHP actively encourage those from all sections of Southend's diverse community to join them.
5. SCHP's strap line is "transforming lives through harmony".
6. SCHP's mission is: "through partnership working, we aim to encourage and support the people of Southend-on-Sea to understand each other, celebrating the diverse social, cultural, religious and ethnic heritage of our community and continuing to work towards a harmonious, just, and compassionate multi-cultural society where all are valued and respected".
7. SCHP's aims are to:
  - celebrate the diversity, culture and heritage of the local community
  - promote a greater understanding and tolerance within the community
  - break down barriers of ignorance and misunderstanding and
  - encourage and facilitate partnership working among community groups for their mutual benefit
8. SCHP has successfully run a big open-air, annual, multi-cultural, family, fun event every summer since 2004. It plans to run its sixth annual event 21 June 2009.
9. Since 2008, SCHP has diversified into to undertaking other activities besides its "Big Event", including smaller events and its Missing Communities project.
10. In terms of favouring particular religions, political parties, cultures, ideologies etc., SCHP remains strictly neutral, other than that which touches upon its aims and objectives, yet it has wide-ranging support from the many and various communities existing in Southend and has been able to forge strong links with statutory and voluntary organisations.
11. Every major faith has been represented at different times on its committee. SCHP continues to bring together the various statutory, voluntary, community, private and faith organisations existing in Southend. SCHP works with members of all faiths or none.
12. SCHP's contribution is increasingly being recognised by statutory and voluntary agencies, e.g. by being asked to join various committees and approached for advice and support, as being able to bring together disparate elements of the Southend community and able to meet its aims.